

**Testimony of David Griffin
Cedar Hill, Tennessee Resident
Season Four Participant on the NBC show, “The Biggest Loser”
Before the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
Subcommittee on Children and Families**

**“Childhood Obesity: The Declining Health of America’s Next Generation—
National Problem, Southern Crisis”**

October 23, 2008

Good morning. My name is David Griffin. I am 33 year’s old and live in Cedar Hill, Tennessee in Robertson County with my wife, Sheri and four beautiful children.

I know what it feels like to deal with childhood obesity. As a child, around age 9 or 10, I started to rapidly gain weight. I didn’t receive nutritional education from my parents. And although I was in athletics, I didn’t exercise outside of athletics. As a child, I was ridiculed for being the big kid, the fat kid.

During my childhood I developed stressed eating habits. I turned to food for comfort, and I continued to gain weight throughout my high school years. I graduated high school weighing 275 pounds. The problems didn’t stop when I left high school, and at 31, I weighed 400 pounds.

I went to see my doctor and he gave me the bad news— my blood pressure was borderline high, my blood sugar was borderline, and it was a wake-up call for me. As I mentioned, I have four children, and I knew I needed to get busy getting healthy, so I could spend time with my children and be here to see them grow up.

My children were all fit, but I wanted to lose the weight and get healthy to set a positive example for them. I wanted to form the healthy habits I wanted to see in them, and set them up for a healthy future.

An old friend of mine suggested trying out for the television show, “The Biggest Loser.” I had never watched the show before. I went down, tried out, and I was lucky enough to be selected for Season Four. I lost 30 pounds before the show, because my doctor said I needed to get healthy, and there was no guarantee that I would get on the show, so I began working even before being accepted for the show.

We began filming the show in May of 2007. From that time until December of 2007, when it ended, I lost 140 pounds. After the show, I lost about another 10 pounds. To date, my total weight loss is about 180 pounds!

Losing the weight and getting healthy has transformed my whole life. It wasn’t about a diet; it was about learning what to do to be healthy, for my family to be healthy. We

restructured our lives together. We removed sodas, teas and junk food from our home. Our children are not exposed to it because they know it's not healthy for them.

For me it was a choice to get healthy. Everyone has to make the decision for themselves. Knowing what I know now, I have learned that you can treat yourself from time to time and it's important to do that so you don't binge eat. If you are training hard and staying on track with your exercise, you feel it when you eat unhealthy foods.

I went from not working out at all before "The Biggest Loser," to spending six to eight hours a day working out on the show. Today, I do an hour every day, six days a week. No excuses. In moments of weakness I try to remind myself that nothing tastes as good as fit feels.

Since the show it's been important to me to sign on with Get Fit Tennessee, and get in front of children to talk about healthy choices. I recently passed my certification exam to be a trainer to teach people to be healthy, and I am starting a boot camp aerobics class in the middle Tennessee area in November.

In my opinion the war with obesity will be won with this generation of children. As you know, statistics show us this generation of children is the first that won't outlive the life expectancy of their parents. Our society and our government must push for more physical education physical education testing in our school systems. I believe children need physical education five days a week.

I think moving soft drink and vending machines from schools will be very effective. If they want it that badly they can bring it to school. And to the critics who say they need these vending machines for revenues to pay for things at school, I say put water and sugar-free drinks or juices in them. Work with vendors to offer healthier alternatives.

Our children's health should be a priority in school systems. School nutrition also needs to be addressed. The menu choices should be healthier. Again, working with vendors to make healthier selections to offer to children is an important step we can take. As far as children go, a healthy mind is an open mind.

Now that I am healthy, I can do so much more with my children. We play outside, I can run and play touch football, go for a walk, or roll around on the floor with my children. My wife and I are closer, too, because we can get closer. We take cycling class together, walks, and those are things we couldn't do together for a long time. I wouldn't trade these things I have now for any food out there today.