

For Immediate Release

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Give Dad the Gift of Good Health for Father's Day this Year

The U.S. Department of Interior and the National Institutes of Health's We Can! program—a national education program to help children maintain a healthy weight—are encouraging children and families to get outside and play at a nearby national park or national wildlife refuge this weekend and beyond.

Father's Day (Sunday, June 15) is the perfect time to move for better health. Kids, take the father figure in your life outside to play. This weekend also includes National Get Outdoors Day on Saturday, June 14, and there are events all over the country to help get families out of the house and into the great outdoors. Playing actively together benefits the whole family.

Increasing physical activity is a primary goal of We Can! (Ways to Enhance Children's Activity and Nutrition), a science-based national education program to help children ages 8-13 maintain a healthy weight. We Can! is a program of the National Institutes of Health, which is part of the U.S. Department Health and Human Services. The program provides tips and resources for parents, caregivers, and community organizations to help children and their families make better food choices, increase physical activity and reduce screen time. The program is now underway in more than 800 community sites in all 50 states and 10 countries.

This weekend marks the start of an exciting new partnership among We Can! and the Department of Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Service. The government partners are joining 40 other national partners in support of We Can! National wildlife refuges and national parks also provide ideal settings for family activities such as a walk in the woods, bike riding, fishing, canoeing or a wildlife watching trip. In addition to the benefits of spending time together outside, families are also keeping physically active and promoting a healthy lifestyle.

“We're very pleased to partner with NIH and help make the nation's fisheries and wildlife refuges and national parks a welcome and exciting resource for youth, parents and caregivers to promote a love of nature and the great outdoors,” said Secretary of Interior Dirk Kempthorne. “With more than 181 million acres of public land in the National Wildlife Refuge System and National Park System, we can provide numerous opportunities for families. We need to get children and their families out of cyberspace and into open spaces. To put down their BlackBerries and go pick blackberries. To stop channel surfing and go wind surfing. To shut off the Web casts and cast a line for a trout.”

“We are pleased to have these new partners collaborating with the We Can! movement to encourage families to take action to help their children maintain a healthy weight, and in so doing, address the childhood overweight epidemic,” said Rear Admiral Steven K. Galson, M.D., M.P.H., acting surgeon general of the U.S. Public Health Service. “More than twelve and a half million American children and adolescents are overweight and at increased risk for chronic conditions such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, type 2 diabetes and asthma. Reducing obesity – and improving the health of millions of children – is a challenge we as a society must fully embrace.”

There are numerous opportunities for families across the country to enjoy fun physical activity outdoors. Not only can families get outside and play together, but they can also develop an appreciation of nature and all that it offers.

For a list of local activities for Get Outdoors Day, visit www.nationalgetoutdoorsday.org. For more activities that families can do together, visit <http://wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov>.

We Can! is a science-based national education program developed by NIH – a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services - to help children ages 8-13 stay at a healthy weight through improving food choices, increasing physical activity, and reducing screen time. We Can! is unique among existing youth obesity-prevention initiatives in its focus on reaching parents and families as a primary group for influencing young people. The program offers flexible, turn-key resources complete with partnership ideas and outreach opportunities to unite community organizations. Four of the National Institutes of Health have combined their unique resources and activities to create We Can!: the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute; the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases; the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development; and the National Cancer Institute. For more information, visit <http://wecan.nhlbi.nih.gov> or call toll-free 866-35-WE CAN (866-359-3226).

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on the Service and the Let's Go Outside! campaign and for ideas on how to connect your family with nature, please visit the Service's website at <http://www.fws.gov/children/>.

The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world. For help finding a national park where your family can hike, swim, canoe, or picnic, visit <http://www.nps.gov>, and to learn how NPS can help local partners create new outdoor recreation opportunities, visit www.nps.gov/rtca/.

Part of the National Institutes of Health, the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) plans, conducts, and supports research related to the causes, prevention, diagnosis, and treatment

of heart, blood vessel, lung, and blood diseases; and sleep disorders. The Institute also administers national health education campaigns on women and heart disease, healthy weight for children, and other topics. NHLBI press releases and other materials are available online at www.nhlbi.nih.gov.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) — The Nation's Medical Research Agency — includes 27 Institutes and Centers and is a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is the primary federal agency for conducting and supporting basic, clinical and translational medical research, and it investigates the causes, treatments, and cures for both common and rare diseases. For more information about NIH and its programs, visit www.nih.gov.

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Editors note: B-roll and still photographs of families enjoying the outdoors are available. Please advise me if you prefer to receive these notices at a different email address.