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Contact:

Kailey Shatzer

214-706-1358

Kailey.shatzer@heart.org

Healthy Way to Grow Aims to Decrease Obesity Among Children Ages Birth to Five
The American Heart Association and Nemours partner to support healthy eating and physical activity in child care settings

DALLAS, September 23, 2013 – With inaugural funding provided by [The William G. McGowan Charitable Fund](#), the [American Heart Association](#) and [Nemours](#), a non-profit children’s health system, are launching Healthy Way to Grow, a technical assistance program for child care centers across the country aimed at decreasing obesity among children ages birth to five years old. The program provides direct, hands-on assistance, customized training, resources and tools to support healthy lifestyles in child care environments. Healthy Way to Grow will launch in fall of 2013.

Components of the program include: developing and adopting a center wellness policy, providing training and technical assistance, engaging parents, and encouraging and recognizing progress towards best practices and policies for physical activity, screen time, food and beverage choices, and infant feeding. The program will pilot in six communities in 2013 with the goal of expanding to more communities over the coming years. Pilot locations include: Rochester, N.Y.; Denver, Colo.; Kansas City, Ks.; Northeastern Pa., Chicago, Ill., and Reno, Nev.

The need for this program is evident with current national statistics indicating that more than a quarter of U.S. preschool children ages 2-5 are overweight or obese. Obese children as young as age 3 show indicators for developing heart disease later in life. The American Heart Association, Nemours and The McGowan Fund believe getting ahead of the problem is essential. Developmentally, birth to age 5 is an ideal time to impact crucial life-long cognitive and behavioral development, and setting positive patterns for healthy diet and physical activity. With so many American children spending a majority of their day in early care and education centers, improving the healthfulness of child care environments makes a significant health impact. This can lead to both a decrease in the number of children under age 5 who are overweight and obese and a decreased risk of developing cardiovascular and other chronic disease over their lifetimes.

“Today’s children are tomorrow’s future, and our collaborative work will help to ensure that the future is a healthy one. Childhood obesity has reached a concerning level in the U.S. with nearly one in three children between ages 2 and 19 being obese. Encouraging an active lifestyle at this critical early age will help prevent health problems later in life and keep kids healthy as they develop,” said Dr. Steve Daniels, Professor and Chairman, Department of Pediatrics University of Colorado School of Medicine.

“*Healthy Way to Grow* is an exciting opportunity for us to engage early care and education providers in the fight against childhood obesity. Nemours is pleased to be collaborating with the American Heart Association, such a well-respected organization, to ensure that child care providers have what they need to help children in their care grow up healthy,” said Debbie Chang, Vice President of Policy and Prevention at Nemours.

“We are very excited to be partnering with the American Heart Association and Nemours on this important initiative,” said Sue Gin-McGowan, president of the McGowan Fund Board of Directors. “Our goal in funding *Healthy Way to Grow* is

to give children the opportunity to live healthier, possibility-filled lives, and leverage our inaugural support by demonstrating to other funders the powerful potential of this targeted initiative.”

For more information on *Healthy Way to Grow* and availability in your community please visit www.healthywaytogrow.org.

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About the American Heart Association

The American Heart Association is devoted to saving people from heart disease and stroke – America’s No. 1 and No. 4 killers. We team with millions of volunteers to fund innovative research, fight for stronger public health policies, and provide lifesaving tools and information to prevent and treat these diseases. The Dallas-based association is the nation’s oldest and largest voluntary organization dedicated to fighting heart disease and stroke. To learn more or to get involved, call 1-800-AHA-USA1, visit www.heart.org or call any of our offices around the country.

About Nemours

Nemours is an internationally recognized children's health system that owns and operates the Nemours/Alfred I. duPont Hospital for Children in Wilmington, DE, and Nemours Children's Hospital in Orlando, FL, along with major pediatric specialty clinics in Delaware, Florida, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. Established as The Nemours Foundation through the legacy and philanthropy of Alfred I. duPont, Nemours offers pediatric clinical care, research, education, advocacy, and prevention programs to all families in the communities it serves.

About the William G. McGowan Charitable Fund

The William G. McGowan Charitable Fund is a philanthropic family foundation established in 1993 to perpetuate William McGowan's tradition of compassionate philanthropy and ethical leadership. Since its founding, the Chicago-based Fund has provided more than \$100 million in grants across its three program areas: education, community initiatives for those most vulnerable, and healthcare and medical research. The McGowan Fund’s grant-making activity is rooted in the belief that quality of life should be available to all. The McGowan Fund pursues this vision by partnering with institutions that build healthy, productive communities through innovative, evidence-based programs that promote disease prevention and academic success. Committed to leveraging its grants for the most positive impact, the McGowan Fund invites partnerships with other community-oriented, grant-making institutions.