



# NEWS BRIEF

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## **THE SALVATION ARMY AND RUSH UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER LAUNCH “KEEP IT FIT CHICAGO”**

*Unique program starts with families in Englewood*

**(CHICAGO—January 10, 2009)** The Salvation Army and Rush University announce the launch of *Keep it Fit Chicago*, a comprehensive, team-oriented, six-month program designed to help Chicago residents create healthier lifestyles and fight obesity. *Keep it Fit* will start off with 50 families, and unlike any other program in the city, each family will have a team of experts from Rush University Medical Center that will tailor a program to fit the family’s specific health needs as they strive to meet their goals.

*Keep it Fit Chicago* is also being supported by World Sport Chicago (WSC), the living legacy of Chicago’s bid for the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Through WSC, two Olympic athletes, Consuella Moore, member, 2004 U.S. Olympic Track Team and Lee Kemp, member 1980 Olympic Wrestling Team and 2008 Olympic Freestyle Wrestling Coach will interact with participants and stress the importance of physical fitness and leading a healthy lifestyle throughout the duration of the program.

“The state of being overweight or obese is widespread in too many of our communities,” said Captain Julian Champion, corps officer, The Salvation Army’s Adele and Robert Stern Red Shield Corps Community Center. “The neighborhood where we’re located, Englewood, is just one of many neighborhoods dealing with this epidemic. The goal of is to address the problem comprehensively, not just on a superficial level. The problem is entrenched for myriad reasons that could involve limited access to healthy foods, a lack of knowledge of healthy nutrition, little to no physical exercise, and just a general lack of support for healthy lifestyles. We mean to tackle the problems on a psychological level and change the status quo.”

While the obesity rates in the country continue to climb, *Keep it Fit’s* aim is to help stem the growth of it in Chicago, and reverse its course for those who are already affected. Over 50 students in different health disciplines at Rush University Medical Center have volunteered to staff the *Keep It Fit* program. The students will each be assigned to one of the participating families to serve as nutritional and activity

coaches, meeting individually with their assigned families to develop a personalized plan that will get the whole family on track for a healthy lifestyle.

The students will then follow up with weekly meetings that might involve shopping for the right kinds of groceries, exercising in the Red Shield gym, or modifying traditional cooking recipes to be healthier, depending on the family's goals. In addition, monthly group meetings will bring all the families together for educational activities in fitness and nutrition, with speakers from the Rush University faculty.

"This isn't the usual short-term weight loss program," said Dr. Cynthia Waickus, family medical doctor at Rush and faculty advisor for the student volunteers. "The aim of *Keep It Fit* is to teach families healthy habits that last a lifetime."

Obesity is at record levels in Chicago, as compared to the rest of the nation. According to a recent study by the Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children, 23 percent of the city's pre-kindergarten-aged children are overweight, while the national average is 10.4 percent of children in that age range. For the first time in recent history, researchers predict that much of the current generation of children will not outlive their parents. This is directly related to the early onset of obesity-related diseases and illnesses. Because children are the ones most affected by the epidemic, *Keep it Fit* was designed primarily to help children and in the process, help their caretakers.

After implementation at The Adele and Robert Stern Red Shield Corps Community Center in Englewood, the goal is to implement *Keep it Fit Chicago* at other Salvation Army Corps Community Centers throughout the city. All elements of *Keep it Fit Chicago* will be free to participants.

### **About The Salvation Army**

*The Salvation Army is the largest provider of direct social services to those in need in the Chicago area. In 2007, its vast array of programs and services reached more than 580,000 people, ranging from infants to seniors. It provided more than two million nutritious meals to hungry people of all ages across metropolitan Chicago. Through shelter programs more than 1,000 men, women and children were accommodated under Salvation Army roofs each night. To volunteer or donate to The Salvation Army, visit [www.salarmychicago.org](http://www.salarmychicago.org).*

### **About Rush University Medical Center**

*Rush University Medical Center is an academic medical center that encompasses the more than 600 staffed-bed hospital (including Rush Children's Hospital), the Johnston R. Bowman Health Center and Rush University. Rush University, with more than 1,730 students, is home to one of the first medical schools in the Midwest, and one of the nation's top-ranked nursing colleges. Rush University also offers graduate programs in allied health and the basic sciences. Rush is noted for bringing together clinical care and research to address major health problems, including arthritis and orthopedic disorders, cancer, heart disease, mental illness, neurological disorders and diseases associated with aging.*

### **About World Sport Chicago**

*World Sport Chicago (WSC) is an Illinois not-for-profit working to enhance the image, awareness and participation in Olympic sports across Chicago and to extend Chicago's international outreach through and for sport and youth. Focused on promoting the development of recreational and competitive sport to the area's youth, WSC works closely with Chicago 2016 and Chicago's 2016's Athlete Advisory Counsel (AAC) to provide sport expertise and athlete insight to the execution of these sporting events. WSC intends to aid Chicago in developing a sustainable, international sporting legacy as a real agent of social change for the city. William Scherr, an Olympic medalist in wrestling, is chairman of the board and Scott Myers serves as the executive director.*