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Medical Reserve Corps Supports the Let's Move! Initiative to Combat Childhood Obesity

Two years ago, First Lady Michelle Obama announced an ambitious national goal of solving the challenge of childhood obesity within a generation, and unveiled a nationwide campaign – Let's Move! – to help achieve it. Many Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) units are addressing the problem of obesity in their local communities by conducting *Let's Move!* activities and developing their own programs and partnerships that influence healthier lifestyles. The network of MRC units includes more than 205,000 medical and non-medical volunteers in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and several U.S. territories, with the local knowledge and cultural sensitivity to make a difference in their communities.

The mission of the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) is to engage volunteers in strengthening public health, emergency response and community resiliency. MRC units initiate and participate in public health activities throughout the year--ranging from flu vaccination clinics and smoking cessation initiatives to disease prevention through programs like the *Let's Move!* and Million Hearts™ campaigns. The *Let's Move!* initiative combats the problem of childhood obesity through a comprehensive approach that builds on effective strategies, and mobilizes public and private sector resources. *Let's Move!* engages every sector impacting the health of children to achieve the national goal, and provides schools, families and communities simple tools to help kids be more active, eat better, and get healthy.

“This isn't the kind of problem that can be solved overnight, but with everyone working together it can be solved,” said _____MRC unit leader. “The _____(name of unit) MRC unit enthusiastically supports the *Let's Move!* initiative as a national effort to address the epidemic of obesity.”

Over the past three decades, childhood obesity rates in America have tripled, and today, nearly one in three children in America are overweight or obese. One third of all children born in 2000 or later will suffer from diabetes at some point in their lives; many others will face chronic obesity-related health problems like heart disease, high blood pressure, cancer, and asthma. A recent study put the healthcare costs of obesity-related diseases at \$147 billion per year. This epidemic also impacts the nation's security, as obesity is now one of the most common disqualifiers for military service.

Let's Move! is comprehensive, collaborative, and community-oriented and includes strategies to address the various factors that lead to childhood obesity. It fosters collaboration among the leaders in government, medicine and science, business, education, athletics, community organizations and more. Success is dependent on engagement at every level of society and, particularly, at the individual, family and community level where the MRC network functions.

MRC units have been engaged in encouraging fitness and combating obesity through a variety of programs and activities, ranging from fitness walks, encouraging parents to walk their children to school, developing a guidebook for providing hands-on nutrition education for preschoolers, and partnering with local high schools to develop peer-to-peer educational programs.

“Communities can play a large role in the *Let’s Move!* initiative by encouraging local leaders to develop policies and programs that create opportunities for physical activity and improve access to healthy, affordable foods, said _____MRC unit leader. “Our MRC unit knows how life is really lived in our community and understands the importance of encouraging, supporting and pursuing solutions that are tailored to children and families facing a wide range of challenges and life circumstances.”

The Medical Reserve Corps is celebrating and commemorating its 10th anniversary and its decade of accomplishments throughout the coming year. For more information about the MRC program, and to find out how you can get involved, please see <http://www.medicalreservecorps.gov>, <http://www.facebook.com/medicalreservecorps> or contact MRCcontact@hhs.gov.

For more information about the Let’s Move! initiative, visit <http://www.letsmove.gov/>.

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The Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) is a national network of local groups of volunteers committed to improving the health, safety, and resiliency of their communities. MRC volunteers include medical and public health professionals, as well as non-medical volunteers who are interested in strengthening the public health infrastructure and improving the preparedness and response capabilities of their local jurisdictions. The Division of the Civilian Volunteer Medical Reserve Corps (DCVMRC) is headquartered in the Office of the U.S. Surgeon General. It functions as a clearinghouse for information and best practices to help communities establish, implement, and maintain Medical Reserve Corps units nationwide.