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YMCA CLC at Elliott to Roll Out National Initiative to Support the Health and Well-being of Hispanic/Latino Families

[Lincoln, Nebraska, November 15, 2011] – The YMCA CLC at Elliott is one of 48 YMCAs nationwide selected to receive a grant from the Kraft Foods Foundation to implement *Salsa, Sabor y Salud* (Food, Fun and Fitness), a national healthy lifestyles program for Hispanic/Latino families. Developed by the National Latino Children's Institute (NLCI) and Kraft Foods, *Salsa, Sabor y Salud* is designed to raise awareness of the importance of good nutrition, increase levels of physical activity and encourage healthy lifestyle habits for the whole family.

"Promoting healthy lifestyles is critical to our commitment to health and well-being, and *Salsa, Sabor y Salud* is one of the ways we're delivering on that commitment," said Rhonda Jordan, President of Global Health & Wellness at Kraft Foods. "Research shows that Hispanic/Latino children are at greater risk for childhood obesity, and through our collaboration with the Y and NLCI we'll be able to get even more Hispanic/Latino families involved and help them lead healthier lives."

This grant is part of a \$1.5 million, three-year grant from the Kraft Foods Foundation to broaden the reach of *Salsa, Sabor y Salud* nationally. According to the American Medical Association, 38.2 percent of Hispanic children ages 2 to 19 are overweight or obese, compared with 31.7 percent of all children in this age group. *Salsa, Sabor y Salud* works with families to promote the importance of achieving balance through healthier food choices and increased levels of physical activity.

The eight-week interactive, bi-lingual course promotes healthy living while celebrating Hispanic/Latino tradition and culture. The curriculum is based on four messages:

- Eat from all food groups every day
- Be sensible about portions
- Be physically active every day
- Take small steps for success

Doug Fox, Executive Director of the Irving (TX) Family YMCA, whose Y participated in a pilot study of the program, has already seen the benefits in his community. "*Salsa Sabor y Salud* has provided us with a great opportunity to engage and empower families to make healthier choices," Fox said. "Families are excited about this program. They have become more knowledgeable about nutrition and healthy foods and are increasing their levels of physical activity."

Salsa, Sabor y Salud has been motivating Latino families to live healthier lifestyles since it was developed in 2002. Last year, the Kraft Foods Foundation and NLCI reconfirmed their commitment to the program by enlisting YMCA of the USA to bring *Salsa, Sabor y Salud* to more families in more communities. Through the three-way partnership, the program will reach 130 communities across the country in three years' time.

Now, the YMCA CLC at Elliott will build on the success of the initiative as part of the program's expansion.

"We are thrilled to be working with the Kraft Foods Foundation and NLCI to provide *Salsa, Sabor y Salud* to the Lincoln community," said Kristi Chambers, YMCA at Elliott CLC Director. "With a commitment to strengthening community, the Y strives to be a leading voice on health and well-being by providing resources and guidance that help kids reach their full potential and families and individuals achieve healthier lifestyles."

Plans to offer *Salsa, Sabor y Salud* locally include:

Classes will take place at Elliott Elementary and we will hope to have at least 100 participants between 4 class sessions. Classes are set to begin on January 12th and we will offer two options for class sessions – Thursdays from 5:00-7:15pm or Saturdays from 9:00-11:00am. We will begin one class session in January and another after spring break. If you are interested in participating, please contact the Elliott school office for more information.

"*Salsa, Sabor y Salud* has engaged thousands of families with culturally relevant content built around traditions and culture," said Josie Garza, Executive Director, NLCI. "The program promotes hands-on learning about making nutritious food choices and increasing physical activity. We're thrilled to reach even more families and communities across the country through the Y, the national leader in health and well-being initiatives."

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Kraft Foods Support of Hunger and Healthy Lifestyles

Kraft Foods is taking a stand when it comes to fighting hunger and promoting healthy lifestyles. The company, along with the Kraft Foods Foundation, is addressing food insecurity through an integrated approach to affect lasting change. The company is meeting the immediate needs of the hungry with direct aid through financial contributions and donations of food. Kraft Foods and its Foundation have donated more than \$1 billion in cash and food to organizations since 1990. In the United States alone, they've provided over one billion servings of food during the past 10 years.

About NLCI

The National Latino Children's Institute was founded in 1997 as a national nonprofit organization and is the only national Latino organization whose primary focus is Latino children. NLCI's mission focuses the nation's attention on the contributions and challenges of young Latinos by advocating for their success and well being through partnerships and programs. NLCI carries out its mission by working with community organizations and national partners. Our history and expertise in working with the Latino community, as well as the staff's commitment and strong relationships across the country, makes NLCI ideally suited to create and implement strategies that eliminate barriers to building healthy communities for young Latinos by incorporating the principles of the national Latino Children's Agenda. NLCI envisions communities and a nation where young Latinos are heard, valued and a priority for the future of our nation. *Salsa, Sabor y Salud* is a copyrighted program of NLCI.

About the Lincoln Y

The Lincoln Y has long been the leader in health and wellness. Many health issues can be alleviated by daily exercise. Healthy living, along with youth development and social responsibility are the major areas of focus of the Y.

In 2010, through its annual Strong Kids Community Support Campaign, the Lincoln YMCA provided over \$1,221,742 in financial assistance and services to children, families and individuals in our community. The Y is also a leader in three important community initiatives including Character Development, which is integrated into all programs, Developmental Assets, which are building blocks for a strong community and Activate America, which focuses on youth obesity, healthy and active living. To learn more about the campaign or how to support the Strong Kids Campaign, please contact any Lincoln YMCA facility or visit www.ymcalincoln.org.