

## August 12, 2008 - Murtha Promotes Diabetes Prevention, Education and Care at Mon Valley YMCA

CARROLL TOWNSHIP, PA -- Congressman John P. Murtha, Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, visited the Mon Valley YMCA today where he participated in luncheon titled "Facing the Challenges of Diabetes and Obesity in our Families and Communities";

In 2003, Congressman Murtha found out through the Air Force Surgeon General that 144,000 Air Force personnel and members of their family have diabetes. This alarming figure, coupled with the fact that over 23 million Americans are living with the disease, has made him a staunch advocate for diabetes research, prevention and care.

Diabetes is the fifth leading cause of death by disease and currently has no cure. In 2007, the American Diabetes Association reported that diabetes cost the United States \$174 billion in medical expenditures and lost productivity. This is a 32% increase from the last study completed in 2002.

"We have a diabetes epidemic right here in western Pennsylvania," commented Murtha. "The American Diabetes Association estimates that there are approximately 40,500 diabetics in just the 12th Congressional District alone, and the medical and indirect costs of the disease add up to \$366 million every year";

Determined to reverse the diabetes epidemic in the military as well as throughout Western Pennsylvania, Congressman Murtha has directed nearly \$120 million in federal funds since 2004 for diabetes research, prevention, education and outreach. This funding is having significant success on military installations and across the nation.

"On average, those with diabetes spend \$10,000 more per year on medical care than those without diabetes," added Murtha.

The University of Pittsburgh Medical Center's Diabetes Institute is looking at the lifestyle factors and choices of type 2 diabetics. Researchers and doctors have attributed a poor diet and lack of exercise, which contribute to a growing rate of obesity, as key factors in the rise of type 2 diabetes nationally. Under the leadership of Dr. Linda Siminerio, the Diabetes Institute is developing educational awareness programs for patients and doctors, as well as providing diabetes specialists and dietitians to work one-on-one with rural communities and medical facilities to deliver care to diabetics and their families. Dr. Siminerio and her team are attacking type 2 diabetes with education and outreach, and their efforts are already showing signs of success.

At Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh, researchers have begun human clinical trials for a cure to Type 1 diabetes after successfully "curing" type 1 diabetes in mice. The research at Children's Hospital is headed by Dr. Massimo Trucco, a world-renowned diabetes researcher. Dr. Trucco and his team have discovered that type 1 diabetes may be triggered by a common virus in children who are genetically predisposed to the disease. They are looking at extracting the islet cells of an individual, engineering them to produce insulin, and transplanting those insulin producing islet cells back into the body. This technique has already proven successful in a mouse model.

###