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For Immediate Release

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Pittsburgh, PA - Congressman John P. Murtha joined Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh today to officially open its Weight Management and Wellness Center (WMWC) in an effort to tackle one of the country's biggest problems - childhood obesity.

The rate of children who are overweight or obese has more than tripled since 1980, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. More than 9 million children (16 percent) between the ages of 6-19 are overweight. In fact Type 2 diabetes, which accounts for up to 95 percent of diabetes cases in the United States, is strongly associated with obesity (more than 80 percent of people with type 2 diabetes are overweight), inactivity, family history of diabetes, a history of gestational diabetes, and high risk racial or ethnic background.

The WMWC's mission is to address the full spectrum of the obesity epidemic, from prevention to early intervention and evaluation of treatment strategies. A multidisciplinary approach is used to address the co-morbidities of obesity including Type 2 diabetes and cardiac, pulmonary, sleep, behavior and learning dysfunction. The key element is family based behavioral therapeutic lifestyle change, the components of which include: medical nutrition therapy, physical activity change, and behavior modification strategies.

"Things like unhealthy diet, fast food and lack of exercise continue to contribute to a growing rate of obesity, which can lead to diabetes," said Silva A. Arslanian, MD, center director. "We are working to develop prevention strategies that encourage healthy eating and active lifestyles in our children and their families to stop the development of devastating adult diseases at such an early age. Children's is so grateful for the continued support and commitment of Congressman Murtha to childhood diseases and problems."

Congressman Murtha has helped Children's secure funding over the years for a variety of childhood diseases and health care issues, including obesity.

"It's a pleasure to support a weight-management and wellness program designed especially for kids," Congressman Murtha said. "Here youngsters will find the encouragement and motivation they need to play more soccer and fewer video games and snack on an apple instead of potato chips. They'll have the opportunity to become stronger, healthier kids who will grow into stronger, healthier adults. That's important not only to the quality of their lives, but to reining in the skyrocketing costs of caring for people whose health problems can often be prevented, or at least delayed, through good nutrition and exercise."

In addition to obesity, Congressman Murtha has supported research efforts in the field of diabetes and Duchenne muscular dystrophy (DMD), two devastating childhood illness for which much groundbreaking research is being done at Children's. It has been a mission of Congressman Murtha to help Children's continue this research.

For more information about the Center, please visit Children's Web site at www.chp.edu, or <http://www.chp.edu/> . To make an appointment or to speak with someone at the Center, please call 412-692-8041.