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For more information contact:

Sunanna Chand, Mayor's Healthy City Initiative: (225) 389-3100

Susan Boudreaux, Mayor's Office: (225) 389-5101

Scott Dyer, Mayor's Office: (225) 389-7957

Press Release

Mayor's Healthy City Initiative Awarded \$1 Million Grant

Funds will enable new Mobile Market to start rolling in early 2013

The Fresh Beginnings Program, developed through Mayor-President Melvin "Kip" Holden's Healthy City Initiative, has been awarded a \$1 million grant from the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana Foundation's *Challenge for a Healthier Louisiana* Grant Program. The purpose of the funding is to support innovative partnerships that promote healthy eating and active lifestyles which are aimed at reducing the rate of obesity in Louisiana, especially among children.

The Fresh Beginnings proposal was selected to improve the health of children and adults in underserved or high-risk populations. Fresh Beginnings community partners include the Big River Economic and Agricultural Development Alliance (BREADA), East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority, Together Baton Rouge, Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center, Project Fit America, Evelyn J. Daniel Education Foundation and the East Baton Rouge Parish School System (EBRPSS).

A major component of Fresh Beginnings is a mobile farmers market designed to make healthy foods available in East Baton Rouge neighborhoods with little or no access to grocery stores. "We are talking about areas of the parish where people have limited access to foods like fresh produce, dairy products and meat necessary for a healthy diet," Mayor Holden said. "The Fresh Beginnings Program will allow us to take healthy foods into these neighborhoods with our new Mobile Market that is similar to those operating successfully in Detroit, Nashville and New Mexico."

Sunanna Chand, Community Outreach Coordinator for the Mayor's Healthy City Initiative, said the Mobile Market is slated to open in early 2013 and will affect over 61,000 residents. "It will feature some of the same foods found at the weekly Red Stick Farmers Markets on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. We will be taking the Farmers Market to people who have trouble not only accessing the current markets but also

shopping at grocery stores,” Chand said, noting that additional expansions will be made at four corner stores to include fresh produce. The offerings will change with the seasons.

The Fresh Beginnings Program will also provide services to four public schools within zip codes 70805, 70807, and 70802 to increase the amount of physical activity in classrooms and during P.E. and to give students, teachers and parents the resources they need to learn about physical fitness, nutrition, and self-esteem. Toward that end, the schools will receive new playground equipment and information on student activities. Installation of the equipment should be completed by the end of December and teacher workshops on nutrition, physical activity, anti-smoking and anti-bullying will be begin in January of 2013.

In total, Fresh Beginnings and 11 other Louisiana programs will receive \$10.2 million from the Blue Cross Foundation to assist in reducing the rising obesity rate across the State. Among the 50 states, Louisiana currently ranks sixth for adult obesity and fourth for childhood obesity. Fresh Beginnings community partners have raised an additional \$1.2 million as matching funds to implement its comprehensive program.

Throughout the funding period, which begins September 1, 2012, the Blue Cross Foundation will work with Pennington Biomedical Research Center in Baton Rouge to administer all 12 grants and to measure their effectiveness in reducing obesity in Louisiana communities. The progress of each program will be posted at www.ourhomelouisiana.org.

The Challenge Grant Program is estimated to impact more than 1.7 million adults and children in Louisiana.

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