

For Immediate Release

**THE WEIGHT OF THE NATION**, A MULTI-PART, MULTI-PLATFORM SERIES ADDRESSING THE NATIONAL OBESITY EPIDEMIC, DEBUTS IN MAY ON HBO

LOS ANGELES, Jan. 13, 2012 – Continuing its tradition of spotlighting the nation’s most pressing health issues in such presentations as “Addiction” and “The Alzheimer’s Project,” HBO addresses obesity in **THE WEIGHT OF THE NATION**, helping launch one of the most far-reaching public health campaigns on this epidemic to date. The multi-part, multiplatform series debuts in May, exclusively on HBO.

In the U.S., 68% of adults age 20 and over are overweight or obese, while 31.7% of the nation’s children and adolescents age two to 19 are overweight or obese.\* Obesity contributes to six of the ten leading causes of death in America, including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, certain cancers and high blood pressure.\*\*

Bringing together the nation’s leading research institutions, **THE WEIGHT OF THE NATION** is being developed in partnership with the Institute of Medicine (IOM), in association with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation and Kaiser Permanente.

“Obesity has become one of the most serious threats to the health of the American people,” comments Harvey V. Fineberg, M.D., Ph.D., president of the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academies.

“If we don’t succeed in turning this epidemic around, we are going to face, for the first time in our history, a situation where our children are going to live shorter lives than we do,” says Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D., director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

“Obesity-related health care costs about \$147 billion annually, and, on average, someone who is obese costs \$1400 more a year to care for,” notes Dr. Thomas R. Frieden, M.D., M.P.H., director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “To get healthy, we’re all going to have to do our part – individuals, communities, local, state and the federal government. If the obesity trend continues, we’re going to face steadily increasing health care costs, as well as more lives lost to type 2 diabetes, heart disease, many cancers and other complications from obesity.”

**THE WEIGHT OF THE NATION** comprises four documentary films, a three-part HBO Family series, 14 bonus shorts, a social media campaign, a book published by St. Martin’s Press and a nationwide community-based outreach campaign to support the initiative.

The four-part series debuts **MONDAY, MAY 14** and **TUESDAY, MAY 15**, on HBO, with two films airing back-to-back each night. The three-part HBO Family series debuts **WEDNESDAY, MAY 16**.

To ensure the widest possible audience, HBO will use all its services, including the main HBO channel, multiplex channels, HBO On Demand, HBO GO and more. All films will also stream free of charge on HBO.com, as well as on multiple platforms by participating television service providers.

Three years in the making, *THE WEIGHT OF THE NATION* spotlights the facts and myths of this urgent public health issue, showing how obesity affects the health of the nation and cripples the health care system. Type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer and arthritis are just a few of the diseases directly linked to obesity and will dramatically increase if the status quo does not change.

Like many other public health problems, overweight and obesity have disproportionate impacts on disadvantaged communities and racial and ethnic minorities. Nine of the 10 states with the highest obesity prevalence are also among the poorest.\*\*\*

Americans are eating too much and too often, and not getting enough physical activity. Less healthy foods, such as soda, chips and candy, have become relatively less expensive, while more nutritious foods like fruits and vegetables have become relatively more expensive. What's more, access to healthy food is a challenge for many communities. Compounding the problem are strong societal forces compelling people to eat more and move less.

The centerpiece of *THE WEIGHT OF THE NATION* is the four-part documentary series, featuring case studies and interviews with leading experts and with individuals and families struggling with obesity.

The first film, "Consequences," examines the scope of the obesity epidemic and explores the serious health consequences of being overweight or obese.

The second film, "Choices," gives viewers the skinny on fat, revealing what science has shown about how to lose weight, maintain weight loss and prevent weight gain.

The third film, "Children in Crisis," documents the damage obesity is doing to the nation's children, tackling subjects ranging from school lunches to the decline of physical education to the marketing of unhealthy food to children.

The fourth film, "Challenges," examines the major forces behind the obesity epidemic, including agriculture, economics, evolutionary biology, food marketing, racial and socioeconomic disparities, physical inactivity, American food culture and the strong influence of the food and beverage industry.

HBO Family's "The Weight of the Nation for Kids," a series of three half-hour films, looks at children who have taken action to prevent obesity in their own lives and communities. From the Rethinkers, a group of New Orleans students, to the heartwarming story of a Goldsboro, NC high school student, the films offer inspiring examples of kids who have made a difference.

In conjunction with the launch of THE WEIGHT OF THE NATION films, the IOM will feature a new report at the CDC's Weight of the Nation™ conference, May 7-9, that reviews the progress made to date in curbing obesity and recommends selected strategies and actions that can accelerate progress in the near future.

To facilitate community action, the campaign will reach deep into local areas to distribute 40,000 community action kits to community-based organizations working on obesity prevention. The kits, consisting of the entire series, discussion guides in English and Spanish, and tips and supplemental materials for hosting screenings, will provide essential tools to catalyze and support local efforts in communities that combat obesity across the country.

#### Sources:

\*National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES)

\*\* Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

\*\*\* Youfa Wang and May A. Beydoun, From the Center for Human Nutrition, Department of International Health, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Baltimore, Md. Jan. 25, 2007.

#### ABOUT THE PARTNERS

##### INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE

Established in 1970 under the charter of the National Academy of Sciences, the Institute of Medicine provides objective, evidence-based advice to policymakers, health professionals, the private sector, and the public. The National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, Institute of Medicine, and National Research Council make up the independent, nonprofit National Academies. For more information, visit [national-academies.org](http://national-academies.org) or [iom.edu](http://iom.edu)

##### CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION (CDC)

CDC works 24/7 saving lives, protecting people from health threats, and saving money through prevention. Whether these threats are global or domestic, chronic or acute, curable or preventable, natural disaster or deliberate attack, CDC is the nation's health protection agency. CDC is a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

##### THE NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH (NIH)

NIH, the nation's medical research agency, includes 27 Institutes and Centers and is a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. NIH is the primary federal agency conducting and supporting basic, clinical, and translational medical research, and is investigating the causes, treatments, and cures for both common and rare diseases. For more information about NIH and its programs, visit [www.nih.gov](http://www.nih.gov).

##### THE MICHAEL & SUSAN DELL FOUNDATION

The Michael & Susan Dell Foundation is dedicated to improving the lives of children living in urban poverty around the world. With offices in Austin, TX, Cape Town, South Africa and New

Delhi, India, the Dell family foundation funds programs that foster high-quality public education and childhood health, and improve the economic stability of families living in poverty. The foundation has committed more than \$825 million to global children's issues and community initiatives to date. [www.msdf.org](http://www.msdf.org).

#### KAISER PERMANENTE

Kaiser Permanente brings together its clinical expertise, research capabilities and community engagement efforts to combat childhood obesity and to improve the health of its members and the communities it serves. The organization's Community Health Initiatives for Healthy Eating Active Living support more than 40 place-based obesity prevention collaboratives, which work with community residents, non-profit organizations and government agencies to increase access to healthy food and opportunities for physical activity in schools, neighborhoods and workplaces. In 2009, Kaiser Permanente received the Pioneering Innovation award from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for its groundbreaking obesity prevention efforts. As the nation's largest integrated delivery system, the organization pioneered efforts such as BMI and exercise as Vital Signs, which have become standards of practice in the health care sector. Every Body Walk!, a public awareness campaign powered by Kaiser Permanente, aims to get people walking 30 minutes a day, five days a week to improve their overall health. For more information, visit [www.kp.org/communitybenefit](http://www.kp.org/communitybenefit).

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