

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**FORMER DALLAS COWBOY RAYFIELD WRIGHT,  
HALL OF FAME ABNER HAYNES, SR. & CITY COUNCILMAN  
ED OAKLEY SUPPORT HEALTHY HEART CAMPAIGN IN DALLAS  
*Foundation Launches Healthy Heart Campaign to Tackle Disparities***

**Dallas, TX** (February 24, 2005) - To tackle cardiovascular disease disparities in Dallas, National Minority Health Month Foundation (NMHMF), in cooperation with Dallas City Councilman Ed Oakley, the Heroes of Football and the American Heart Association, today launched the Healthy Heart campaign, a data-driven initiative, at a press conference at Parkland Health & Hospital's Bluit-Flowers Health Center. Pfizer Pharmaceuticals, Inc. is the sponsor of the groundbreaking effort.

"With February being American Heart Month, it is appropriate to kick off this evidence-based campaign now," said Dr. Gary Puckrein, Executive Director, NMHMF. "Working in collaboration with local government, community organizations and industry in Dallas, we hope to turn the red zip codes into green, healthy zip codes by identifying individuals who are at highest risk and strategically implementing interventions."

The Healthy Heart campaign will target specific zip codes in Dallas where cardiovascular disease disparities are significantly higher than the national average in an effort to eliminate the disproportionate burden of premature death and preventable illness. Small grants will also be available to local organizations to enhance programming and increase success.

"I applaud this collaborative effort by the National Health Month Foundation in their work with the Dallas community," said State Senator Royce West. "Their goal is to decrease the prevalence of cardiovascular disease, one of leading causes of mortality among residents and within the broader community. I anticipate and am eager to work with the Foundation in their campaign to promote a healthier Dallas."

Local and national stakeholders gathered at the press conference to discuss the need to localize interventions in order to bridge the health gap. Among the community leaders who spoke were: Dallas City Councilman Ed Oakley, District 3; Shawna Nesbitt, M.D., Director, The Hypertension Clinic, UT Southwestern Medical Center; Leonard Berry, M.D., Bluit-Flowers Health Center, Parkland Hospital Systems; Cecilia McKay, Executive Director, Dallas Concilio; and Pam

Carter, City of Dallas Diabetes Awareness Program & American Heart Association's African American Task Force Chair.

Members of the Heroes of Football, an organization of former football players giving back to their community, spoke out about addressing this chronic illness at the event. These Heroes include former Kansas City Chiefs player and football hall of famer Abner Haynes, Sr., Chairman and founder of the Football Heroes; former Dallas Cowboys players Rayfield Wright and Mel Renfro; James Mannis, former TCU and Baltimore Colts player; Lemuel Stinson, former Chicago Bears player; Hurles Scales, former St. Louis Cardinals player; Julius Turner; Darrell Simpson; and Roy Cassell.

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"Due to a number of heredity and lifestyle factors, heart disease and stroke disproportionately affect African Americans and Latinos/Hispanics," said Manuel Cruz, M.D., American Heart Association, Dallas Division Board Member. "In partnership with the National Minority Health Month Foundation, the Healthy Heart campaign will enable the American Heart Association to help African Americans and Latinos/Hispanics understand their risk factors for cardiovascular disease and make healthy lifestyle decisions."

At the end of March, coalition partners will begin facilitating 7-10 small screening events at community sites in targeted zip codes identified as health disparity zones - contiguous ZIP codes characterized by a disproportionate prevalence of diseases and conditions that can be linked to higher death rates, greater hospitalization rates and cost. The goal is to collect and analyze health statistics, and ultimately disseminate results to the stakeholders on the ground. At the screenings, residents will receive educational materials and those at risk will be directed to Parkland Health & Hospital and other health care facilities for treatment and follow up.

To support this initiative, Paradigm International and Dallas Concilio have coordinated with the Foundation to launch the Pathways to a Healthy Heart Walking Program in targeted zip codes. This 12-week program will provide pedometers and personal goals that can be achieved alone or as a part of a walking group to offset the affects of cardiovascular disease. It allows participants to improve their own personal health while also improving the overall health of the community. The program will be available in English and Spanish and will target African Americans and Latinos/Hispanics. Joyce Green of Paradigm International and the Dallas Concilio will provide on-site coordination for the walking program.

At the press event today, Bluit-Flowers Health Center helped to launch this unprecedented campaign by conducting screenings and distributing pedometers to all those in attendance.

The Dallas Healthy Heart initiative is an ongoing effort designed to mobilize local government, health care advocates and leaders, physicians, medical centers, faith-based and community organizations, and industry to promote cardiovascular disease awareness, prevention, and treatment. Coalition partners include State Senator Royce West, American Heart Association, Parkland Health & Hospital, Dallas Concilio, City of Dallas Diabetes Awareness, Dallas Urban League, American Diabetes Association, and Dallas Parks & Recreation.

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*National Minority Health Month Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization that promotes the building of coalitions and evidence-based solutions towards the elimination of health disparities.*