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**MARTIN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**PLAYGROUND GAMES AIM TO INCREASE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO HAVE FUN, AND ENJOY GOOD HEALTH:  
Peaceful Playgrounds**

**Sponsored by the Martin County Health Department with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation**

Port Salerno Elementary students returned to school this fall and noticed some freshly painted rectangles, circles and various colored shapes, carefully spaced on the blacktop around the campus. In November students and school staff received an introduction to new recess games and a variety of fun playground activities available during break time by launching *Peaceful Playgrounds*. The program encourages students to increase physical activity by engaging in recreation with well marked games that represent fun activity choices, with minimal equipment required for game participation. With the support of the school staff, first grade students were taught to play using a consistent set of rules and instructed on how to solve conflicts with playground disagreements.

Program activities build upon the foundation of a local health initiative established in 2007. The objective is to encourage people to increase physical activity, to choose healthier food and lifestyle options to prevent chronic diseases. "We know that the benefits of physical activity are numerous including being more physically fit, improved psychological well-being, lowering blood pressure and the risk for cardiovascular disease," said Donna Goodwin, Program Coordinator, Healthy Communities, Healthy People Martin County. "We hope the students will develop positive attitudes towards regular exercise, encourage their families to do things together and incorporate daily physical activity as a part of a healthy lifestyle." she added.

With funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Martin County Health Department was chosen to be a part of The *Multi-State Learning Collaborative: Lead States in Public Health Quality Improvement* which is managed by the National Network of Public Health Institutes. With the support of school staff, the health department coordinated a kick off event to implement the program on November 13<sup>th</sup> and will engage the students in new fun physical activities and health education in 2010. "We are excited to have the opportunity to team up with the Martin County Health Department, to take part in this program and see the students enjoy fun physical activity during recess time." said Principal Tracey Miller.

The Martin County Health Department is a part of the *Multi-State Learning Collaborative: Lead States in Public Health Quality Improvement* is managed by the National Network of Public Health Institutes with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

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