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CONTACT: Will Holbert

P: (916) 606-7992

E-mail: wholbert@rs-e.com

Victoria Berends

California Project LEAN

P: (916) 837-6366

E-mail: vberends@gmail.com

"Rethink Your Drink" Media Campaign Unveiled Today in Bakersfield to Improve the Health of Central Valley Residents

Options to Sugar-Loaded Drinks Encouraged at Work, Home and School

BAKERSFIELD, Nov. 17, 2011 — In an effort to shift public opinion about sugar-loaded drinks, the Rethink Your Drink campaign is bringing its message to Bakersfield this week by highlighting the need for healthy alternatives to sugary drinks in the workplace, home and school.

The campaign is sponsored by the California Department of Public Health, California Project LEAN (Leaders Encouraging Activity and Nutrition), in concert with the Dolores Huerta Foundation, Tulare County Health and Human Services Agency, Kaweah Delta Healthcare Foundation and Earlimart School District.

Many people do not realize that the average 20-ounce soda — now a standard size offered in stores and vending machines — is loaded with the equivalent of 22 packs of sugar. Sugar-loaded drinks may lead to obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease and some cancers.

"Sugary drinks are not being consumed as an occasional treat," said Peggy Agron, Program Chief of California Project LEAN, a program of the California Department of Public Health.

"Sugary drinks have become a part of the daily diet of most Americans. We are pleased to

launch this new Rethink Your Drink media effort in the Central Valley to help families choose healthier beverages such as water and unflavored low-fat 1% milk.”

The Central Valley Health & Nutrition Collaborative, Kern County Public Health Services Department and Arvin Union School District also participated in the event, where organizers set up a pyramid of drinking glasses, each stuffed with sugar packets.

For children, each extra can or glass of sugary beverage consumed per day increases their chance of becoming obese by 60 percent. In California, the prevalence of being overweight and obese is higher among adolescents who drink sugary drinks than those who do not.

In California, 62 percent of adolescents ages 12-17 and 41 percent of children ages 2-11 drink at least one soda or other sugary beverage every day. Some of the highest sugary beverage consumption rates by California children aged 2-11 are in San Joaquin Valley counties. In Kings County, 57 percent of 2-11 years olds drink one or more sodas per day with 55 percent in Kern County and 53 percent in Fresno County.

The prevalence of sugary beverages carries over into the workplace. The average person in the United States drank 45 gallons of sugary beverages in 2009! By reducing the intake of sugary beverages, California’s \$41 billion health care costs attributed to physical inactivity, obesity and overweight could be substantially reduced.

California Project LEAN funded the Rethink Your Drink campaign through its American Recovery and Reinvestment Act grant, which seeks to combat overweight and obesity. This grant supports educational efforts, policy and environmental changes that promote increased access to healthy beverages while reducing access to sugar-loaded drinks in school, workplaces and community settings.

To receive more information about this program, or to learn about ways Central Valley residents can make a health difference for themselves and their families, please visit www.CaliforniaProjectLEAN.org, or call 1-916-552-9907.

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