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Contact:

Michael Taylor, Executive Director
Marketing & Communications
UPMC Health Plan
412-454-7534
taylor2@upmc.edu

UPMC Health Plan and Armstrong County Wellness Initiative to Receive National Attention

Dr. Kiran Bhat Invited to Present at American Academy of Pediatrics Conference

PITTSBURGH (June 21, 2007) — Kiran Bhat, MD, general pediatrician with Children's Community Pediatrics – Armstrong, has been invited to present at the prestigious American Academy of Pediatrics' "Future of Pediatrics Conference: **Community Pediatrics, Medical Home and Beyond**" June 29 – July 1 in Orlando, Fla. Dr. Bhat will discuss the newly launched Armstrong County school-based project aimed at reducing and preventing childhood obesity and its related health risks.

The project, known as HEAL (Healthy Eating, Active Lifestyles) Armstrong, is a collaboration of UPMC Health Plan, Children's Community Pediatrics – Armstrong, ACMH Hospital (Armstrong Center for Medicine and Health), ACMH Hospital Foundation, and the Armstrong School District. The initiative aims to reduce childhood obesity in the county by educating children and families about healthy lifestyles through in-school, after-school, and community programs.

"The rise of childhood obesity is a significant concern for all of us who are focused on improving the health of our community," says UPMC Health Plan President Diane Holder. "We are pleased that Dr. Bhat can share this project with a national audience. This effort illustrates how an innovative public health approach can begin to address the root causes of this problem and establish a sense of pride in the health of its children."

An estimated 35% of children in the Armstrong School District – about 2,170 students – have a body mass index or BMI showing that they are heavier than 85% of children of

their age and gender nationally, according to the first survey of the students conducted last year. Since planning for the program began more than two years ago, the school district has changed its menu to offer healthier foods and has eliminated soft drinks from vending machines in the schools. Most schools in the district now have in-school wellness programs and after-school programs in development.

Last year, UPMC Health Plan awarded a \$50,000 grant to HEAL Armstrong to support this program, which incorporates the National Institutes for Health's "We Can!" program, an easy-to-use wellness program for parents and teachers. The American Academy of Pediatrics also awarded a Community Access To Child Health (CATCH) Implementation grant for a pilot of the project, which is now underway at Elderton Elementary School. The ACMH Hospital Foundation has contributed more than \$20,000 since 2005.

"I'm looking forward to sharing the details of our program with a broader audience," said Dr. Bhat. "Although we don't expect to see results until three or four years from now, I do think there is already a positive shift toward a healthier lifestyle in Armstrong County."

About UPMC Health Plan

UPMC Health Plan, the second-largest health insurer in Western Pennsylvania, is owned by the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC), one of the nation's top-ranked health systems. The integrated partner companies of the UPMC Insurance Services Division – which includes UPMC Health Plan, Work Partners, EAP Solutions, UPMC *for You* (Medical Assistance), and Community Care Behavioral Health – offer a full range of group health insurance, Medicare, CHIP, Medical Assistance, behavioral health, employee assistance, and workers' compensation products and services to nearly 1 million members. Our local provider network includes UPMC as well as community providers, totaling more than 80 hospitals and more than 7,500 physicians in a 29-county region. For more information, visit www.upmchealthplan.com.

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