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‘Sisterhood is Healthy’ Campaign Helps African-American Women Improve Their Health

*American Cancer Society, American Diabetes Association and American Heart Association
Join Advertising Council on Health Education Campaign*

NEW YORK, February 15, 2006 – Two-thirds of all deaths in the United States can be attributed to these four serious diseases: cancer, diabetes, heart disease and stroke, and African-American women are at particularly high risk. That’s why The Advertising Council, along with the American Cancer Society, American Diabetes Association and American Heart Association, has developed the second phase of a three-year public health campaign to increase awareness of the impact that lifestyle choices have on these four diseases. A television public service advertisement (PSA), “Bus Stop,” will air nationally beginning in February and will run throughout the year, targeting the African-American community.

Focus group research conducted by the three organizations in conjunction with The Advertising Council reveal that African-American women are aware of the importance of eating healthfully and staying active, yet many lack the continued motivation to maintain healthy lifestyle habits. “Our goal is to empower African American women, particularly those ages 35-50, to make healthy everyday choices to help reduce their risk of developing these diseases, and to encourage them to help their family and friends make these changes, as well,” says Gena R. Carter, MD, a director on the American Cancer Society’s national board of directors and a staff radiologist at South Shore Breast Evaluation Center, Scituate, Mass. “For many people, that support from others can provide that extra motivation needed to keep living a healthier life.” The PSA tagline, “Sisterhood is Healthy,” urges women to encourage and support their friends to eat healthfully and get active.

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"Establishing healthy lifestyle habits is especially important for African American women, who are two to four times more likely than Caucasian women to develop type 2 diabetes," said Andrea Williams, RD, LD, CDE, Chair of the American Diabetes Association African American Project Team. "It is crucial that these women — who are often gatekeepers for their families' health as well as their own — empower one another to maintain habits that are known to prevent or delay the onset of this devastating disease."

"It is doubly important for African-American women to pay attention to heart disease and stroke risk factors because the prevalence of heart disease, stroke and other cardiovascular diseases is 44.7 percent for African-American women compared to 32.4 percent in white women," said Anjanette Ferris, MD, American Heart Association spokesperson and clinical fellow in cardiovascular disease at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center in New York City. "We want women to know their risk factors and support each other in making the right choices everyday to reduce their risks."

"An outstanding number of African American women in our country delay making healthy lifestyle choices, despite their high risk for a number of chronic diseases," according to Peggy Conlon, President & CEO of The Advertising Council. "Our research has found that when it comes to choosing healthy behaviors, peers are among the primary influencers for this community. I am confident that this inspirational work, created pro bono by Vigilante, will empower women to motivate and support their friends in embracing life-saving behaviors."

The campaign is the result of an unprecedented collaboration between the nation's leading not-for-profit health agencies to develop a joint prevention initiative, "Everyday Choices For A Healthier Life™." The initiative is designed to encourage Americans to lower their risk of chronic diseases by following a unified set of recommendations:

- Eat a healthy diet as a key component to achieving and maintaining a healthy body weight
- Be physically active
- Don't smoke, and avoid second-hand smoke
- See a physician to assess your personal health risks

The three organizations sponsor a joint Web site, www.everydaychoices.org, featuring helpful tips and links to more information on healthy eating, physical activity, weight management, smoking cessation and recommended medical tests, as well as resources to help women make healthful lifestyle choices. To view the PSAs, visit www.adcouncil.org/campaigns/disease_prevention/. Also, a free educational brochure provides valuable and practical information people can use to help protect themselves from cancer, diabetes, heart disease and stroke. The brochure is available by calling 1-866-399-6789 (toll-free).

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About the organizations:

The **American Cancer Society** is dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem by saving lives, diminishing suffering and preventing cancer through research, education, advocacy and service. Founded in 1913 and with national headquarters in Atlanta, the Society has 13 regional Divisions and local offices in 3,400 communities, involving millions of volunteers across the United States. Visit the American Cancer Society at www.cancer.org or call 1-800-ACS-2345.

The **American Diabetes Association** is the nation's premier voluntary health organization supporting diabetes research, information and advocacy. Founded in 1940, the Association's mission is to prevent and cure diabetes and to improve the lives of all people affected by diabetes. The Association's commitment to research is reflected through its scientific meetings; education and provider recognition programs; and its Research Foundation and Nationwide Research Program, which fund breakthrough studies looking into the cure, prevention, and treatment of diabetes and its complications. Visit the American Diabetes Association at www.diabetes.org or call 1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2383).

Since 1924 the **American Heart Association** has helped protect people of all ages and ethnicities from the ravages of heart disease and stroke. These diseases, the nation's No. 1 and No. 3 killers, claim more than 930,000 American lives a year. The association invested more than \$439 million in fiscal year 2003-04 for research, professional and public education, and advocacy and community service programs so people across America can live stronger, longer lives. Visit the American Heart Association at www.americanheart.org or call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721).

The Ad Council is a private, non-profit organization with a rich history of marshalling volunteer talent from the advertising and media industries to deliver critical messages to the American public. Having produced literally thousands of PSA campaigns addressing the most pressing social issues of the day, the Ad Council has effected, and continues to effect, tremendous positive change by raising awareness, inspiring action and saving lives. To learn more about the Ad Council and its campaigns, visit www.adcouncil.org.

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