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Coloradans More Realistic About Their Weight, LiveWell Colorado Research Shows

First Year Results of Statewide Culture Change Campaign Shows Coloradans Making Personal Connection to Obesity

DENVER (May 30, 2012) – New research from [LiveWell Colorado](http://www.livewellcolorado.org), a nonprofit organization committed to preventing and reducing obesity in Colorado, shows Coloradans have a stronger understanding of obesity and more are making a personal connection to the issue today than last year. Results show not only are more Coloradans able to now correctly identify what obesity looks like, but they are also more realistic about their personal weight status.

The research was conducted nine months after the beginning of LiveWell Colorado's culture change Awakening Campaign, which aimed to create a personal connection to obesity as part of a larger effort to motivate healthy behavior change. Earlier research showed Coloradans were overly optimistic about their health and weight status, thinking obesity was "someone else's problem"—a major barrier to making healthy changes. This was the first known, rigorous analysis of changes in knowledge and attitudes following a statewide public education campaign targeting obesity.

What do the results tell us? Obesity is now perceived less as an extreme condition belonging only to someone else—more people have an accurate and personal perception of obesity and are facing a reality check that they have work to do. For example:

- Correct identification of an obese male and obese female, based upon height, weight and gender, improved by nine percentage points in general; among moms, correct identification improved by 11 points
- Perceptions of one's own weight status as being overweight increased nine points, from 46 percent to 55 percent (now more consistent with Colorado's actual rate of 58 percent obese and overweight adults)
- Desire to lose weight increased from 46 percent to 55 percent

The Awakening Campaign had an unusually high recollection and follow up rate. More than half (56 percent) of Coloradans remembered seeing the campaign, and it was

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higher (63 percent) among the target audience of young mothers. Of all the respondents who remembered the campaign, nearly half (48 percent) said it changed their image of the obesity problem in Colorado, 51 percent said it made them think about improving their own health and 1-in-5 (18 percent) people actually took steps to discover their own weight status. In addition, more people are now being more honest about their health, with self-perceptions describing one's health as "excellent" declining by nearly half (26 percent to 14 percent), a 10 percent difference in the number of people declaring they get enough exercise and a nine percent decrease in the number of people asserting they eat sufficient fruits and veggies (64 percent to 56 percent).

The results suggest that educational campaigns are a potentially useful means to increase public understanding of obesity as a personal health issue, and ultimately, to facilitate behavior change towards improved prevention of obesity.

"After being a part of the LiveWell Colorado awakening video project, I used the knowledge I gained about my own Body Mass Index to go out and learn how my weight could impact my long-term health," said Tracy Pineda, Colorado mother of two who was featured in LiveWell Colorado's 2011 campaign. "Once I understood my weight status, it was easier to stick to one small change, and then another, until one day my entire family was embracing a healthier lifestyle. As a mother, I not only owed it to myself to get a reality check on my health, but also to my husband and our children so that I can be a positive role model at home and in our community."

"Before we can motivate people to take action, we have to help them realize that not only is there an obesity problem in our state, but also that they may be personally part of that problem," said Tracy Boyle, vice president of marketing and communications for LiveWell Colorado. "Now that we made progress in this area, we will focus the next phase of the campaign on helping individuals take small steps toward a healthier lifestyle, and ultimately creating a culture change where the healthy choice is the easy and popular choice."

LiveWell Colorado's approach and subsequent campaign, which has been recognized with several awards this year including a PR News Nonprofit Award, bronze Telly Award and a Webby Award, leverages a combination of traditional advertising, social media, public relations, community outreach and special events to help educate, engage and drive healthy changes among Coloradans. The campaign will continue through the remainder of this year and potentially into 2013.

About LiveWell Colorado

LiveWell Colorado is a nonprofit organization committed to preventing and reducing obesity in Colorado by promoting healthy eating and active living. Leading a comprehensive approach, LiveWell Colorado inspires and advances policy, environmental and lifestyle changes that aim to provide every Coloradan with access to

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healthy foods and opportunities for physical activity in the places they live, work, learn and play. LiveWell Colorado's strategic partners and funders are the Colorado Health Foundation, Kaiser Permanente, and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. For more information about LiveWell Colorado, visit www.livewellcolorado.org. "Like" LiveWell Colorado on [Facebook](#) or "follow" @livewellco on [Twitter](#).

About the Research

HealthCare Research led the research for LiveWell Colorado in February 2012. Interviews were conducted primarily by telephone in both English and Spanish, with an option to complete the survey online. Respondents were screened to ensure they were at least 18 years of age, and the sample was balanced to represent the state of Colorado in terms of geography, ethnicity and income. A supplemental sample of cell phone-only households was included to improve the representativeness of the results. The maximum margin of sampling error on 1,100 interviews is +/- 3 percentage points at the 95% level of confidence. A series of nine focus groups were also conducted with mothers statewide. A full copy of the report is available upon request.

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