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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **DeKalb to Develop Healthier Families Program**

*County selected to participate in national obesity prevention effort*

**DECATUR, Ga.** — The DeKalb County Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs is one of four parks and recreation departments in the nation to be selected to develop an obesity prevention program. Led by Vanderbilt University and funded by the National Institutes of Health, the Healthier Families Program aims to help parents and preschoolers aged three to five years old learn about making healthy choices while being active as a family.

“DeKalb County is enthusiastic about the opportunity to develop the Healthier Families Program,” said interim parks and recreation director Marvin F. Billups Jr. “The program educates residents about the power of utilizing recreation facilities and making healthy food choices.”

The Healthier Families Program has proven to decrease obesity in preschoolers enrolled in the program by half. Additionally, the program has shown a four-fold increase in the usage of recreation facilities by families after completing the program.

The county completed two pilot programs in the past two years. During the pilots, the county implemented the program at one county recreation center requiring families to meet at the facility for one hour a week for 12 weeks. Families learned healthy behaviors such as reading food labels for sugar and caloric content. Families also participated in group recreation center programs including walking and yoga.

The county plans to launch the program next year and will share pilot program findings during an educational session titled, “Designing and Implementing Evidence-Based, Family-Based Programming for Health,” at the 2017 National Recreation Parks Association Annual Conference, September 26-28 in New Orleans, LA.

For more information, contact LaShanda Davis, public relations specialist, at 404-371-3643 or [Lsdavis@dekalbcountyga.gov](mailto:Lsdavis@dekalbcountyga.gov).

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