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## **VIRGIN HEALTHMILES PLEDGES \$6 MILLION-PLUS DONATION AS PART OF YEAR-LONG OBESITY AWARENESS CAMPAIGN**

*Virgin Teams with Texas Governor Rick Perry to issue Capitol Steps Challenge to all U.S. governors as first stage of 2009 obesity awareness initiative*

BOSTON, MA (December 10, 2008) – Virgin HealthMiles, the leader in developing employee wellness programs that reward individuals for getting healthy, today announced it is pledging over \$6.3 million in donations to U.S. state government programs as part of a year-long initiative geared at raising awareness of the issue of [childhood obesity](#) in America.

To launch the initiative, Virgin HealthMiles has partnered with Governor Rick Perry (Texas), who has invited governors across the U.S. to participate in the [Capitol Steps Challenge](#) to fight [obesity](#) and demonstrate the correlation between increased activity levels and good health. States across the country, including Alabama, Alaska, Florida, Idaho, Indiana, Kentucky, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia and Wisconsin have joined the Challenge and are working together to raise national awareness of this important issue.

Virgin HealthMiles is a first-of-its-kind [health incentives](#) program that rewards people for leading active and healthy lives. Physical activity is critical for maintaining a healthy weight and decreasing the risk of many chronic lifestyle-driven diseases, such as heart disease and type-2 diabetes. Virgin HealthMiles takes a unique approach, encouraging people to do the activities they enjoy most, and rewards them for their efforts. Virgin HealthMiles is part of Sir Richard Branson's renowned Virgin group.

“Obesity rates are skyrocketing in the U.S., and the serious wellness consequences of this condition further burden our already-strained healthcare system,” said Chris Boyce, CEO of Virgin HealthMiles. “The governors and their states are leading by example, and I’m thrilled to be working with them to support the positive impact of healthy, active lifestyle choices. The Capitol Steps Challenge is just the first stage in our year-long commitment to fighting obesity, and we look forward to making it an engaging and rewarding experience.”

### About the Capitol Steps Challenge

For two weeks beginning January 1, 2009, Governor Perry and Texas executive agency leaders will compete with other governors and their respective state

leadership in the Capitol Steps Challenge. Teams will compete head-to-head by tracking their daily activity, with a goal of achieving the highest average steps per person.

At the end of the Challenge, Virgin HealthMiles will declare the state team with the highest average steps per person as the Most Active Governor's Team in the nation and will make a \$50,000 donation to that state's childhood obesity program. If the winning state chooses to participate in the second phase of Virgin HealthMiles' obesity initiative, they can earn double all donations, increasing the total potential donation to \$250,000.

"As adult and childhood obesity rates continue to rise at alarming rates, I'm sure governors across the nation are as committed as I am to finding an innovative solution to encourage people to adopt healthier, more active lifestyles," said Governor Perry. "We all know that the path to success is through hard work and determination, but sometimes, it's an incentive waiting at the finish line that adds the necessary motivation to persevere. That's what interested me most about the Virgin HealthMiles program."

The second phase of Virgin HealthMiles' obesity initiative will be individual State Leadership Challenges, where teams of 250 individuals from state government offices across the U.S. embark on a year-long program to increase their physical activity -- again leading by example to their constituents about the relationship between increased activity levels and improved wellness. Based on activity levels, states can earn donations of up to \$125,000 toward their childhood obesity programs. More details on the State Leadership Challenge will be announced in early 2009.

"With obesity levels increasing every year, state leaders understand that now is the time to tackle obesity among their constituents. We believe the State Leadership Challenge and Virgin HealthMiles' potential pledge of more than \$6 million in donations is a significant step to enable the states to take action," said Sean Forbes, president of Virgin HealthMiles. "We encourage every state to take advantage of the Virgin HealthMiles State Leadership Challenge and earn money that can be put to valuable use in fighting childhood obesity in their states."

For more information about the Capitol Steps Challenge, visit [www.virginhealthmiles.com/capitolstepschallenge](http://www.virginhealthmiles.com/capitolstepschallenge).

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### **About Virgin HealthMiles**

Virgin HealthMiles provides employee health programs that pay people to get active. The company's preventative approach, based on physical activity and healthy lifestyle change, attracts an average of 40% of employees who participate, which helps organizations reduce medical costs and improve

employee productivity and satisfaction. Over 100 industry leaders, including American Diabetes Association/Shaping America's Health, APL Limited, Hospital Corporation of America-Shared Services, Jack in the Box, Louisville Metro Government, and Shands Jacksonville Medical Center, have selected Virgin HealthMiles' award-winning program for their employees. For more information, visit [www.virginhealthmiles.com](http://www.virginhealthmiles.com).