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NEWS RELEASE

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Riverside County Public Health Recognized for Designing Healthy Communities

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – (April 3, 2006) –As one of the nation’s fastest-growing large counties, Riverside County has grappled with urban sprawl and some of the country’s unhealthiest air. Now, with another million residents expected within 20 years, Riverside County is working on strategies to fight the serious health problems in children that have accompanied the county’s rapid growth.

Children who become less fit and more overweight increasingly suffer from chronic diseases such as asthma and diabetes. By improving environments for children, Riverside County hopes to promote better health.

“We all want children in Riverside County to be as healthy and safe as possible. But we are losing ground in this fight because of our environment – the buildings, roads, sidewalks where our children live and play every day,” said Susan Harrington, Director of Public Health. “Healthy communities for children will become extinct unless we act now.”

The Riverside County Department of Public Health has teamed with local developers and the county Planning and Transportation departments. The goal is to design more walkable communities with wider sidewalks, narrower and safer streets, and more parks, trails and bike lanes. Evidence shows that people are healthier when they have access to safe places to exercise and neighborhoods that are walkable.

“The Planning and Public Health departments have been collaborating for two years to help control sprawl and create livable communities. As partners, we learn from each other and find answers that will build a healthy future for our current and future residents,” said Bob Johnson, director of planning for Riverside County.

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The Riverside County Department of Public Health is being recognized by the American Public Health Association during National Public Health Week, April 3 – 7, as one of five communities nationwide that are implementing solutions to create communities that are more active, livable and healthy for kids.

The theme of health week is “Designing Healthy Communities: Raising Healthy Kids.” The Department of Public Health is sponsoring the following events to empower Riverside County residents and leaders to make simple changes that will make our community more livable and healthier for kids.

Wednesday, April 5: Walk to School Day and Health and Safety Fair: A fun, educational event involving children, parents, schools and community groups. The event promotes opportunities to increase physical activity, healthy eating and safety for children – all vital to improving children’s health. Held at Collett Elementary School, 10850 Collett, Riverside, from 8-9:30 a.m. For event information, call 951-358-7171.

Friday, April 7: Designing Healthy Communities Forum. The Department of Public Health and the American Public Health Association will sponsor a forum to explore the innovative ways Riverside County is partnering to create healthier, more livable communities for our children. Randall Lewis, developer and executive vice-president of Lewis Operating Corporation; Dr. Patricia Mail, president of the American Public Health Association; and Dr. Jay Hoffman, superintendent of Nuvview Union School District; will discuss their efforts to make communities more livable, healthy and walkable. Held at California Baptist University, Copenbarger Dining Room, 8432 Magnolia Ave., Riverside, from 8:30-11:30a.m. For event information call 951-358-7171.

For additional information on these events, please contact Sarah Mack at 951-358-5557. Visit the following sites for additional information on Livable Communities and Public Health Week activities:

www.rivco-buildhealth.org, www.dhs.ca.gov/phweek and www.nphw.org.