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1020 Washington St. N, Twin Falls, Idaho

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**A Higher Than Average Percentage of South Central Idaho Children Considered Overweight**

TWIN FALLS—a newly released study shows that 16% of south central Idaho third graders are overweight (compared to 13% statewide) and an additional 16% are at risk of becoming overweight. This puts them at increased risk for health problems such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease, and Type 2 diabetes.

The study, conducted by Health and Welfare's Bureau of Community and Environmental Health in partnership with Idaho's seven public health districts, measured the height and weight of approximately 300 third graders from 44 schools around the state. These measurements were used to determine each student's Body Mass Index, an indicator that helps screen for overweight and obesity. Third graders were chosen for the study because they generally are at a stable weight and in between growth spurts.

Body Mass Index screenings of 378 third graders from eight schools in south central Idaho showed not only a higher percentage of overweight students, but also a lower than expected percentage of healthy weight students at 66% compared to 70% statewide. "Although these differences are not statistically significant, they are programmatically significant and need to be monitored," according to Maggi Machala, Community Health Director for South Central Public Health District (SCPHD).

Plans are to repeat the study every two years in order to monitor trends and the impact of interventions. SCPHD is sharing study results with area schools and will be working with them on strategies to help more children attain a healthy weight. Families can get ideas on making healthy changes in a free *Healthy Habits, Healthy Families* calendar published by Health and Welfare. The 2009 edition will be available at no charge to families by calling the Idaho CareLine at 211.

For more information, contact Tami Pearson, SCPHD Physical Activity and Nutrition Program Coordinator, at 737-5945.

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