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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Grand Rapids Middle School Students Become Certified Calcium Chefs

Students from Riverside and Westwood Schools Compete in Cook-Off

Okemos, Mich., November 2004 – The pride that 60 Grand Rapids middle school students have in their newly acquired cooking skills is bubbling over! Students now know how to prepare dishes such as “Mexican” Enchiladas, Apple Pie in a Glass, and Berry Delicious Fruit Pie on their own. They’ve had so much fun trying different herbs and spices, learning how to cook creatively, and garnishing their creations that many aspire to become chefs. As they prepare for their grand finale, a cooking competition at Gilda’s Club in Grand Rapids on November 10, the excitement is heating up like Creole Jambalaya.

Many of the Riverside and Westwood students didn’t know what herbs were before the Calcium Chef program brought food, fitness, and fun to the YMCA of Greater Grand Rapids after-school program. During one of the weekly cooking classes, comments such as, “That smells good!”, “Mmm!”, and “Can I keep it?” filled the room as Raquel Pereira, dietitian with Spectrum Health HeartReach, passed a fresh basil leaf around for students to see, touch, and smell. “Is growing herbs hard to do?” Pereira asked with a smile and a sparkle in her eye, “No – it is so easy. I have herbs in little pots in my kitchen and just snip some off whenever I need them.”

The goal of the Calcium Chef program is to empower kids to eat healthfully and be physically active. During October, 60 Grand Rapids middle school students participated in entertaining educational sessions, interactive cooking classes, and recipe and cookbook development. The program helps students acquire basic food preparation and physical activity skills and learn about healthy eating, including the

health benefits of dairy foods.

On November 10, students will become certified Calcium Chefs, showcase their culinary skills, and receive kitchen gear to encourage them to keep on cooking. Spectrum Health HeartReach and the YMCA of Greater Grand Rapids developed the innovative Calcium Chef program. The program's implementation was made possible by a \$5,000 grant from United Dairy Industry of Michigan.

Pereira has inspired the students to have an interest in food and nutrition and a love for cooking. "We were aware that a program like this was needed in the community," comments Pereira, "But the positive impact is so much greater than we expected. The students have brought such enthusiasm and creativity to the cooking experience. Now they have the knowledge, skills, and confidence to enjoy and appreciate food and to eat healthfully."

The 3-A-Day of Dairy Nutrition Education Grant program is implemented by United Dairy Industry of Michigan to help children adopt an active lifestyle and develop positive eating behaviors to improve their overall diet by including three servings a day of milk, cheese or yogurt.

Visit **www.3aday.org** for nutrition tips and quick and easy recipe ideas. Dairy is doctor-recommended: The American Academy of Pediatrics urges kids to choose milk, yogurt and cheese for the calcium they need.

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United Dairy Industry of Michigan is a local affiliate of the National Dairy Council. The National Dairy Council® was founded in 1915 and conducts nutrition education and nutrition research programs through national, state and regional Dairy Council organizations, on behalf of America's dairy farmers.

Spectrum Health is a West Michigan-based regional health system. With 14,000 employees, it is one of the top integrated health systems in the country. The health system is comprised of nine hospitals with more than 2,000 licensed beds, 1,600 medical staff members, more than 140 service sites, a 430,000-member health plan, helicopter transport service, long-term and continuing care services, home care and hospice care. Spectrum Health has earned numerous national awards in the past year, such as *Money* magazine's listing of best hospitals coast-to-coast and Verispan 100 Integrated Healthcare Network status.

To schedule an interview, contact:

- Karen Giles-Smith, registered dietitian, United Dairy Industry of Michigan: 517-349-8480 x227.
- Bruce Rossman, Media Relations Manager, Spectrum Health: 616-391-3706.
- Julie Sielawa, Service Learning Director, YMCA of Greater Grand Rapids: 616-285-9077.

Visit the 3-A-Day section of www.udim.org for photos (hi-resolution images) of the grant winners and the Calcium Chef kids that can be downloaded for reproduction.

Cooking Competition Details:

Date: Wednesday, November 10, 2004

Time: 4-5 p.m.

Place: Gilda's Club, 1806 Bridge Street NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504.

Directions:

- Take 96 West to 196 West (toward downtown G.R.)
- Take the Lake Michigan Dr. exit (exit 75) toward M-45 West
- Turn slight right onto Lake Michigan Dr. NW
- Turn right onto Covell Ave NW
- Turn right onto Bridge St NW
- 1806 Bridge St NW