

NEWS RELEASE

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NBA All-Star and Olympic Athlete LeBron James and Dr. Ian Smith Celebrate the Launch of *The 50 Million Pound Challenge's* First "Citywide Team Challenge," Kicking off in Cleveland, Ohio *Free Fitness Event at the Quicken Loans Arena on June 18th -- Join FIT 4 CLEVELAND Team*

Cleveland – LeBron James and Mayor Frank Jackson invite Cleveland residents to join a new program that encourages individuals to team up to improve their health and well-being with a FREE health and fitness plan – the *Cleveland City Challenge*. The city challenge is an extension of *The 50 Million Pound Challenge* – the successful national initiative founded by physician and *VH1's Celebrity Fit Club* diet expert, Dr. Ian Smith. Dr. Ian, Mayor Jackson and LeBron James will lead a rally at the Q Arena on June 18th. LeBron will issue a call to his city and fans to join him in the fight for healthier lifestyles by signing up for his [FIT 4 CLEVELAND](#) team at [50millionpounds.com](#). Research shows weight loss can be more effective when tackled as a group. *The Challenge* has already helped more than half a million Americans lose more than 2 million pounds collectively! The city challenge is expected to be a highly valuable tool to help participants achieve weight-loss success while contributing to the campaign's 50 million pound goal.

"It has been extremely inspiring and rewarding to see people shed pounds and gain self-esteem, health and happiness as a result of their participation in *The Challenge*," said Dr. Ian Smith, author of the *NY Times* #1 best-seller *The Fat Smash Diet*. "These new city challenges will increase the program's impact by helping individuals benefit from working with a support team as they strive to make healthier food and fitness choices. I hope other cities take up the cause and enlist champions like LeBron and Mayor Jackson to help their citizens improve their health and lives."

"Maintaining a healthy lifestyle is important for everyone," said LeBron James. "I am proud to be a part of the *Cleveland City Challenge* and to lead the [FIT 4 CLEVELAND](#) team. This is a great way to show how easy it is to stay in shape."

"People all across the country are coming together to take control and lose the weight that has been negatively impacting their health. There are more than 10,000 *Challenge* teams helping members lose on average 25% more weight. That's a winning formula," said Dr. Ian. "With our first city challenge, that success will only multiply. Together, we have the ability to resist temptation and do what it takes to reverse the obesity epidemic that is plaguing our country and create a culture of healthy living."

Backed by hundreds of civic and celebrity champions, elected officials and national health and civic groups, *The Challenge* is one of the most far-reaching initiatives of its kind. Anyone can join at [50millionpounds.com](#), an online support community that tallies total pounds lost and offers free resources, including a personal weight tracker to measure progress. People can also get a free *Challenge* kit with a CD, brochure, menu and fitness advice, and a pedometer to count steps. Kits and all *Challenge* resources are free, thanks to sponsor State Farm[®]. On the website, people can form and join as many teams as they want. The [FIT 4 CLEVELAND](#) team is open to all Cleveland residents and will help the city track its collective progress.

A study in the July 2007 *New England Journal of Medicine* found that close friends and family set a powerful example for each other—they tend to gain but can also lose weight together. *The Challenge* aims to reach its goal by making it easier for millions to fight the epidemic of excess weight threatening half of all Americans. More than 135 million Americans and two in three adults are overweight; double the rate a few decades ago. Each week, 10,000 die from heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cancer and other illness related to inactivity and diet. African Americans are especially hard hit: 80% of women and 67% of men face higher risk from weight-related diseases, with life expectancy five years below the U.S. average.

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About The 50 Million Pound Challenge:

Dr. Ian Smith's *50 Million Pound Challenge* is a national health initiative encouraging people to come together and take control of their health by getting fit, losing excess weight and turning back the deadly toll of weight-related diseases that threaten nearly half of Americans and hits the African-American community especially hard. *The Challenge*, a free campaign supported and endorsed in name and deed by national civic and health organizations, is sponsored by State Farm.

About Dr. Ian Smith:

Dr. Ian is a diet expert on *VH1's Celebrity Fit Club* and author of the *NY Times* #1 best-sellers *Fat Smash Diet* and *Extreme Fat Smash Diet*, and other works of fiction and non-fiction. He hosts his own TV and radio shows, *BET's Meet the Faith* and *HealthWatch* on *American Urban Radio Network*. Dr. Ian is a contributor to *The View* and *Men's Health Magazine*. He has filed reports and written for *NBC Nightly News*, *Today Show*, *Essence*, *Ebony*, *People*, *Cosmopolitan* and the University of Chicago's *Medicine on the Midway*.

About State Farm:

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