

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FRIDAY, JANUARY 9, 2009



Virginia Woman Inaugurated as 'Challenger of Year'

Marcella Jones wins national online poll at 50millionpounds.com to claim title and \$1000 prize, inspires others in the process

Chicago – A misdirected compliment from a convenience store clerk at first hurt, then motivated, Marcella Jones to change her life by losing 68 pounds with the help of the *50 Million Pound Challenge*. Jones was one of 12 Challengers who shared their successful weight loss stories as part of the online Challenger of the Year contest. Challenge participants were asked to cast their vote for the person whose story inspired them to join the fight against the epidemic of excess weight. By sharing her story, Jones not only inspired and motivated others, but also won a \$1000 prize. She will continue to promote The Challenge and her experiences via a blog at 50millionpounds.com.

“My motivation was the store clerk who said to me and others in line, ‘Pregnant people are gorgeous aren't they? How far along are you?’ I was devastated because I was not pregnant,” Jones relates. “I had lost my husband and myself to obesity. The next day I typed out what the clerk said and I began my journey to 140 pounds. I lost 65 pounds in 5 months and have kept it off. The Challenge has helped me with resources and by the stories of others. I'm glad I was able to help others by telling my story and will continue to do so.”

The 50 Million Pound Challenge, is a free national health initiative launched April 2007 by physician, author and diet expert Dr. Ian Smith. It has already inspired 815,000 Americans to come together to log more than 3 million pounds lost.

“I applaud Marcella not only for her personal success, but for sharing her story to help motivate others as they strive to lose weight to improve their health to look and feel great,” said Dr. Ian Smith, who is also diet expert on *VH1's Celebrity Fit Club* and author of the new *The Four Day Diet*. “She was ready to make the mental commitment required for success and used the Challenge tools to make her goal a reality. The personal triumphs and success stories of our participants are truly remarkable. Like no other measure, these individual successes set the standard for *The Challenge*, and prove the power we each have to transform our lives. In them we can all find inspiration and resolution solutions to lead healthier lives.”

A study in the July 2007 *New England Journal of Medicine* (<http://content.nejm.org/cgi/content/full/357/4/370>) found that teamwork is key. It showed 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 join together to fight the epidemic of excess weight and weight-related illness. Today more than 135 million Americans and two-thirds of adults are overweight, with the obesity rate doubling in the last few decades. 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 illness, with life expectancy five years below the U.S. average.

Anyone can join *The Challenge* at 50millionpounds.com, the campaign's online support community. The site tallies total pounds lost and offers participants free resources including a 30-day diet plan, personal weight and activity trackers, and *Challenge* teams to make fitness easier and more fun. Currently, more than 18,000 *Challenge* teams are helping members lose 20 percent more weight than the overall campaign average. It's a winning formula—and cities, churches, civic groups, friends and families across America are teaming up to help reverse the epidemic of excess weight and turn it into a culture of healthier living.

For more details on *The 50 Million Pound Challenge*, also visit 50millionpounds.com.

###

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.

About Dr. Ian Smith:

Dr. Ian Smith is diet expert on *VH1's Celebrity Fit Club*, contributor to *The View*, and a former editor of *Men's Health*. He hosts his own nationally syndicated radio show *HealthWatch* on *American Urban Radio Networks*, has written for *Time*, *Newsweek*, *New York Daily News* and has been featured in *People*, *Essence*, *Ebony*, *Cosmopolitan* and *University of Chicago Medicine on the Midway*. He is author of 5 books, including #1 NY Times bestsellers *The Fat Smash Diet* and *Extreme Fat Smash Diet*, and the new *The 4 Day Diet*.