

Oral Testimony of Jon Rand
GM of KAYU FOX 28, Spokane, Washington
“Images Kids See on the Screen”
Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet Hearing
June 22, 2007

Good morning, Chairman Markey and Ranking Member Upton. My name is Jon Rand, and I am the General Manager of three Fox affiliate stations serving most of Eastern Washington and Northern Idaho, broadcasting out of Spokane. I am here to testify today on behalf of the National Association of Broadcasters about the issue of childhood obesity and the efforts my stations have undertaken to fight this battle.

Education is key to combating obesity challenges facing our children and families. Therefore, our stations have chosen to play a part in reversing this trend. The result of that commitment is a campaign called “HEALTHY CHOICES = HEALTHY FAMILIES.”

The genesis for this campaign becomes evident when you consider the facts. According to the Centers for Disease Control, the prevalence of overweight children ages 6 to 11 has more than doubled in the past 20 years. The rate among adolescents, ages 12 to 19, has more than tripled. Just as frightening are the health risks to children associated with obesity. For example, overweight children and adolescents are more likely to have high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and type 2 diabetes.

The goal of our “HEALTHY CHOICES = HEALTHY FAMILIES” campaign is to utilize the power of television and the Internet to make a difference in the health of our children. This campaign, which began in January 2007, is a three-pronged effort.

First, we have trademarked and branded the “HEALTHY CHOICES = HEALTHY FAMILIES” logo and created public service announcements aimed at children and their parents. To date, we have created 16 different PSAs that we are showing at *all* times of the day, and on *every* day of the week. To give you a flavor of what we’re doing, I’d like to share with the Committee one of the PSAs we have produced.

[RUN PSA: HCHF_KIDS]

The second prong of the campaign involves utilizing our news broadcasts to inform our viewers about the threats from childhood obesity.

Lastly, we have launched a “Healthy Choices = Healthy Families” website filled with resources families can use to find expert knowledge and helpful tips about nutrition, exercise and childhood obesity. This site directs visitors to information provided by health professionals about childhood obesity, including how “overweight” is defined for children, the prevalence

of children who are overweight, the factors associated with being overweight, and the related health consequences. In fact, we have partnered with Sacred Heart Children's Hospital in Spokane, and I have attached a letter to my testimony from the hospital indicating that because of the PSAs, viewers are utilizing the website to ask for help and information.

This is a campaign we are dedicated to for the long term. We plan to keep the information fresh and continually add new research to educate our viewers.

While I agree that we need to view the issue of childhood obesity as a serious national dilemma, I do not believe that the regulation of children's advertising is the best way to solve this problem. I fear that regulation of this kind of advertising may diminish the availability and quality of children's programming. The harder it is to find advertising for children's programming, the harder it is to convince the creative community to produce high quality programming.

At my Spokane station over the last few years, advertising during children's programming hours has dwindled. In the late 1990s, we had just over \$1 million per year in children's programming revenue. Last year, we generated *only* \$2,415 in revenue from advertising during children's

programs. The main reason for this dramatic change is that much of the children's programming, and consequently the advertising, has migrated to cable networks where there are niche channels geared specifically to children.

There are many factors that contribute to childhood obesity. Computers, video games and television all contribute to a child's inactive lifestyle. But the solution to this problem is found well beyond what kids see on broadcast television. Children must be encouraged to exercise, parents must take responsibility for providing their children healthy foods, and schools should serve nutritious meals and reinstate physical education.

As a broadcaster, I take my responsibility to my local community seriously. It is because of this responsibility that we have undertaken this "HEALTHY CHOICES = HEALTHY FAMILIES" campaign against childhood obesity.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for inviting me here today, and I am pleased to answer any questions.