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Canada's 'Looneyspoons Sisters' Take Up the Fight Against Childhood Obesity in Partnership with the Canadian Federation of Junior Leagues' *Kids in the Kitchen* Program

Toronto, Ontario, March 8, 2011 – Janet and Greta Podleski, the co-hosts of the popular Food Network Canada TV series, [Eat, Shrink & Be Merry!](#) and authors of the best-selling *Looneyspoons* cookbook, have joined the [Canadian Federation of Junior Leagues'](#) national campaign to promote the Kids in the Kitchen program, which is one of the most successful programs targeting childhood obesity in North America. The program, which the [Junior League of Calgary](#) started as the *Junior Chefs* in 2001, is now being offered as [Kids in the Kitchen](#) by more than 200 independent Junior Leagues in Canada, the U.S. and Mexico.

The [Podleskis](#) were drawn to the program because of its basic premise, says Greta: *That kids belong in the kitchen.* "I believe it's important to get kids involved in the kitchen when they're young," she says. "Most kids find cooking fun and fascinating...it's like an edible science experiment!"

Janet adds, "If we don't teach children how to cook, they'll eventually move out of the home without one of life's most important skills: the ability to prepare a healthy meal. That's a shame, because it means they'll be forced to live off processed, packaged foods and fast foods which are almost always high in salt, bad fats and sugar, including high-fructose corn syrup, which has been linked to childhood obesity and diabetes."

Now in its 6th year as a major community outreach program of the [Association of Junior Leagues International, Inc.](#), the implementation of the *Kids in the Kitchen* program is as individual as the League that puts it on. Some are schools-based. Others are staged with community partners. And others are carried out exclusively by the individual League. But there is one constant: Kids come in physical contact with food that is *fun* to prepare and eat.

Greta comments, "Getting kids to appreciate fresh, natural and healthy foods starts in the kitchen! If we can make cooking and nutrition a fun and tasty topic, then maybe we can inspire children to choose a healthy diet over a diet of fries, chicken fingers and sugary drinks."

Janet and Greta Podleski's three healthy-eating cookbooks, *Looneyspoons* (1996), *Crazy Plates* (1999; a finalist for the James Beard Foundation Cookbook Awards) and *Eat, Shrink & Be Merry!* (2005) have combined sales of over 1.8 million copies, making them three of the top-selling cookbooks in Canadian publishing history.

Deborah Maw, National Coordinator of the Canadian Federation of Junior Leagues, said that the Podleskis are providing their services and endorsement to Kids in the Kitchen on a pro bono basis. “We are delighted to work with Janet and Greta who feel deeply about the importance of healthy cooking and eating for all of us, but particularly for children who find themselves at risk for obesity.”

The Canadian Federation of Junior Leagues’ national *Kids in the Kitchen* campaign kickoff will take place on March 8 at the Morse Street School in Toronto. Within the next few months individual Leagues throughout Canada will be organizing their own regional events.

About The Canadian Federation of Junior Leagues

The Canadian Federation of Junior Leagues consists of Leagues in Edmonton, Calgary, Hamilton/Burlington, Toronto and Halifax that connect women committed to strengthening communities. Through effective leadership and passionate volunteers, Canadian Junior Leagues have worked together to promote voluntarism, develop the potential of woman, and improve children’s health. For more information, visit the <http://www.cfjl.org/>.

About The Association of Junior Leagues International, Inc.

Founded in 1901 by New Yorker and social activism pioneer, Mary Harriman, the Junior Leagues are charitable nonprofit organizations of women, developed as civic leaders, creating demonstrable community impact.

Today, [The Association of Junior Leagues International, Inc.](http://www.ajli.org/) (AJLI) is comprised of more than 155,000 women in 292 Junior Leagues throughout Canada, Mexico, the United Kingdom and the United States. Together, they constitute one of the largest, most effective volunteer organizations in the world.

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