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For Immediate Release

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Summary of *Natural Wonders* Projects

Note: The following description of projects emerging from the Natural Wonders Initiative provides an overview of tasks needed to accomplish the goals of the Natural Wonders' Partnership Council. These activities will provide the information for the Council members to review and prioritize so to complete an action plan to improve the health of Arkansas children thereby improving their quality of life. The project leads will work closely with one another so that their respective efforts can be informed by the work of their colleagues and so that items revealed by one group may be explored with another. This exchange of information should make the exploration more timely and valuable in providing a candid picture of regional differences and similarities with regard to child health issues.

Injury Prevention Center: This three-year investment will result in a coordinated system of evidenced-base injury prevention education, interventions, and research with evaluated outcomes and continual surveillance of the impact on children in Arkansas. The impact of the ACH Injury Prevention Center will be apparent in death and injury data, particularly for children ages 1-19. Potentially dozens of children a year will avoid death and serious injury, but at this time no firm expectations regarding results can be set. During the third year, evidence of effectiveness will lead either to external funding or will warrant continuing support from ACH.

The ACH Injury Prevention Center will respond to the most common cause of death and disability to children after the first year of life. Through application of the principles of the science of injury prevention, the goal of the center will be to reduce injury and the consequences of injury in children, particularly those from high-risk and indigent environments. This will be achieved through education, clinical and research activities that translate injury prevention science into practical applications for children and families. Primarily the center will:

- Improve the health of children of the state by reducing injury rates;
- Foster collaboration to increase effectiveness of existing and future programs;
- Evaluate programs and promote research into new solutions; and
- Establish centralized planning and coordination for emerging injury prevention endeavours.

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The ACH Injury Prevention Center will have the potential to influence the safety of children throughout Arkansas through its multiple functions. This will include ACH's clinical populations, the general population of children statewide, and their parents. In particular, the center will help to ensure that high risk and vulnerable populations are identified and provided with services and education as effectively and efficiently as possible.

Initially, the ACH Injury Prevention Center will establish 1) a recognizable resource for public education and 2) a mechanism for planning and evaluating existing and future injury programs statewide. The center will also fund and evaluate new pilot programs to fill in identified gaps, including evidence-based programs for safer teen driving and drowning prevention that are demonstrated to save lives in other states. The center will provide leadership in exploring injury problems that are less well understood, such as all terrain vehicle injury, in hopes of defining new solutions.

Phone Survey & Study Circles (Arkansas Advocates for Children & Families):

To add further information to the statistical status of child health in the state, Arkansas Advocates will be seeking citizen input regarding the health challenges facing children and their families. This exploration will assist the Natural Wonders Council in determining whether average Arkansans are familiar with the problems; reveal what priorities Arkansans have regarding the health issues; and exposing regional differences. This information will compliment and enhance the statistical profile prepared by Arkansas Advocates in the Natural Wonders report. Additionally, the Study Circle process of engaging stakeholders from communities in AR will help foster a constituency for addressing the problems and a base for executing the recommendations that are forthcoming from the Natural Wonders Council. Involving community stakeholders to address the health problems confronting families will be critical in moving the report and recommendations to action steps and solutions. The phone survey will be in the field in the fall of 07 with summary results available by year's end. The discussion guide for the Study Circle conversations will be developed in the fall, site selection and recruitment of volunteer hosts and facilitators will be secured so that the Study Circles can begin in February '08 and a report submitted by end of March.

Engagement of the Academic Community (College of Public Health): Data used to develop the Natural Wonders report raised the question of possible gaps in available data and research as distinguished in respective regions of the state. The COPH will gather input on data needs and gaps from the Natural Wonders Council as well as other academic/scientific experts by forming panels to explore the existing data more thoroughly and identify any missing pieces. This approach will also allow the Council to identify specialists around the state in child health related research topics and to seek to gain their buy-in to the Council's work. Engaging the academic side of health and healthcare will complement anticipated efforts by AACF and AAP to engage community and provider members and get their input into the health issues facing children. Site

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selection for the academic panels and the development of discussion prompts will be completed in the fall. All panels will be conducted with a final report issued by the end of March 08. As with the other contractors, COPH will report progress to the Council at regular meetings and seek input as needed.

Engagement of Pediatric Providers (Academy of Pediatrics-AR Chapter): AAP will convene at least four focus groups across the state to get practitioner response to the *Natural Wonders: The State of Children's Health in Arkansas* report. Focus group participants will be recruited from family practice and pediatric physicians, nurses, and AHEC medical staff. There will also be one focus group consisting of payer groups, representatives such as those from insurance and employee benefit programs. Similar to the community stakeholder and academic engagement efforts, this exploration will continue to gain insight as to why children suffer the health problems illustrated in Natural Wonders and what can be done to help. Additionally, participants will be queried to identify health issues which may not have been mentioned in the report. Recruitment of focus group participants and preparation of focus group discussion questions will be conducted in the fall with focus groups being conducted in early 2008. A final report of the focus group findings will be completed by March 2008.

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