



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Lt. Governor Brown, Baltimore Ravens, Asthma & Allergy Foundation, and DHMH Partner to Launch Maryland “Winning with Asthma” – A Web Program for Youth Coaches Statewide**

**BALTIMORE, MD (October 21, 2008)** – Lt. Governor Anthony G. Brown and the Baltimore Ravens launched the Maryland “Winning with Asthma” program today. Brown was joined outside M&T Bank Stadium for the launch by rookie Ravens safety Haruki Nakamura, and Maryland Department of Health & Mental Hygiene Secretary John Colmers.

The Asthma & Allergy Foundation of America- MD/DC Chapter (AAFA MD-DC) will carry out marketing and program logistics. The AAFA Chapter’s founder Phil Norman, M.D., and Executive Director, Susan Sweitzer were on hand to offer remarks, as were reps from AstraZeneca. Edmondson-Westside High School Varsity Football Coach Dante Jones spoke about the importance of all youth coaches logging on to [www.winningwithasthma.com](http://www.winningwithasthma.com) to view the free instructional video, learn about asthma, and receive the Coach’s Clipboard and Certificate of Recognition.

“I don’t ever want to lose a game with my star player on the bench because of asthma,” said Coach Dante Jones. “‘Winning with Asthma’ will help me manage my players’ asthma so they can stay on the field. More importantly, though, this program could save a player’s life and I hope my fellow coaches join me and sign up with ‘Winning with Asthma.’”

“‘Winning with Asthma’ originated at the Departments of Health in Minnesota and Utah through funding from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It begins in Maryland through the efforts of the National Lieutenant Governors Association (NLGA), Governor Brown’s office, the Asthma & Allergy Foundation MD-DC Chapter and with funding and support from AstraZeneca.

‘Winning with Asthma’ is an online program that trains youth coaches, physical education teachers and parent or volunteer coaches about asthma. As many as one out of 10 youth athletes have asthma and some don’t tell their coaches for fear of being benched. “‘Winning with Asthma’ provides coaches with the education needed to identify symptoms, facilitate self-management strategies for their players and to recognize emergency situations.

“Few chronic diseases touch as many Maryland families as asthma. According to the Center for Disease Control, asthma is the third-leading cause of hospitalization for kids under age 15,” Lt. Governor Brown said. “‘Winning with Asthma’ will help us keep our student athletes healthy and safe and will provide our youth coaches with the necessary training to help athletes with asthma thrive on the playing field.”

Ravens safety Haruki Nakamura spoke about his personal experience as an athlete who thrived on the football field despite having chronic asthma throughout his life. He noted that youth athletes with asthma can excel in sports if they understand the symptoms of asthma and can manage it wisely.

“I am happy to help raise awareness about asthma in youth sports,” said Nakamura. “Too often, this chronic condition goes unnoticed by the public.” Removing something from his pocket, he said, “I still travel everywhere with my inhaler, just in case I feel an attack coming on.”



“Kids should not have to sit on the sidelines because they have unmanaged asthma,” said DHMH Secretary John M. Colmers. “Thanks to the Baltimore Ravens and the ‘Winning with Asthma: Coach’s Clipboard Program,’ Maryland’s youth sports coaches will have the tips they need to help get kids back on the field and back in the game.”

Between 2002 and 2006, twenty-seven Maryland children died from symptoms associated with asthma. An average of 81 Marylanders die each year because of symptoms caused by asthma. Asthma remains one of the most disparate chronic diseases in Maryland and nationally. African American children suffer from asthma at a disparate rate when compared to white, Hispanic and Asian children. In Maryland, African American children are four times more likely to visit the emergency room and three times more likely to be hospitalized because of asthma-related symptoms than white children. A similar disparity exists between black and white adults. In all, the asthma disparity between whites and blacks costs Maryland Medicaid an additional \$2 million each year.

In 2006, nearly 10,000 Marylanders, including more than 3,000 youth, were hospitalized because of illnesses associated with asthma. That same year, 44,000 Marylanders visited an emergency room because of asthma, half of them under the age of 18. Asthma-related hospitalization cost Marylanders \$57 million in 2006. Asthma-related emergency room visits cost Marylanders an additional \$27 million.

DHMH in conjunction with agencies such as the AAFA Chapter is leading several efforts to manage the effects of chronic asthma and address the disease’s disparate nature. The MACP is currently working with the Environmental Health Coordination Program, the Maryland College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine to establish a pilot program for reporting of occupational asthma cases and education of practitioners regarding occupational asthma.

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