



For Immediate Release  
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## **NEW VIDEO GAME DOES NOT SUPPORT HEALTHY BODY IMAGE**

OTTAWA – Ontario eating disorder support agencies, Hopewell (Ottawa), Sheena's Place (Toronto), Danielle's Place (Burlington) and Hope's Garden (London) feel strongly that the Nintendo WiiFit does not support healthy body image.

On May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2008, Nintendo will be releasing the Wii Fit, the new video game that features over 40 exercises and games with varying levels of difficulty. Wii Fit comes with a balance board shaped like a bathroom scale, which measures the users' center of balance and body mass index (BMI), as well as shifts in weight, posture, and body movement. This will allow users to set weight-loss goals and track daily progress.

As childhood obesity rates increase (the report "Healthy Weights for Healthy Kids" has found that Canadian childhood obesity rates rank fifth-highest of 34 developed countries), parents, educators and government officials may welcome the Wii Fit as an innovative way to get kids moving.

However, there is a downside to the Wii Fit. Hopewell believes the position that society's increasing concern over obesity is fuelling unhealthy behaviours towards food, exercise and weight. Scales, BMI, and diets are key factors in the development of eating disorders such as anorexia, bulimia, and binge eating. A video game that measures BMI sends a message to our children that weight loss is the ultimate goal of exercise. Further the BMI measurement is intended for persons over the ages of 18, so should not be included in games intended for youth.

Healthy lifestyles involve physical activities that are fun, participatory and build confidence and a healthy body image. Hopewell encourages individuals to involve themselves in sports and activities that make them feel good. A video game that pairs weight loss with physical activity can result in dissatisfaction with weight and body.

Hopewell, a not-for-profit registered charitable organization, was created in 1999 by three Ottawa mothers fuelled by a common goal to help their daughters overcome their anorexia. Recognized and supported by the professional community, CHEO and the Ottawa Hospital, the centre has become the 'go to' place for information on and support for those affected by eating disorders (anorexia, bulimia or binge eating). Hopewell offers knowledge, support and hope to help people deal with the realities of these serious and potentially fatal illnesses. Nearly one in five young women suffering from serious eating disorders does not survive.

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