COACHELLA VALLEY OBESITY PREVENTION AND "READY, SET, SWIM" PROGRAMS ATTRACT NATIONAL ATTENTION

UNDER SECRETARY FOR FOOD, NUTRITION AND CONSUMER SERVICES OF THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, KEVIN CONCANNON JOINS STATE AND LOCAL LEADERS TO VISIT INNOVATIVE LOCAL PROGRAMS THAT COMBINE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, NUTRITION EDUCATION AND WATER SAFETY FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

COACHELLA VALLEY, Calif. – October 14, 2016 -- Coachella Valley's nutrition education and obesity prevention and "Ready, Set, Swim" programs are attracting the attention of national and statewide leaders in promoting young children's health and wellness. On Tuesday, October 18, Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services of the United States Department of Agriculture Kevin Concannon will visit Coachella Valley to see the programs in action.

Ana Bolanos, Branch Chief of the Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Branch of the California Department of Social Services, and Caroline Kurtz, Assistant Branch Chief, and Nestor Martinez, Project Officer, of the California Department of Public Health will join Concannon for the several-stop tour.

Leadership from the Desert Healthcare District, County of Riverside Health System – Public Health, City of Desert Hot Springs, Boys and Girls Club of Coachella Valley, Boys and Girls Club of Palm Springs, Desert Recreation District, Palm Springs Unified School District, and County of Riverside, Department of Public Social Services will led the several-stop tour. All participating organizations are all partners in the implementation of the nutrition education and obesity prevention program for local youth.

The tour will start with a visit to Sunny Lands Elementary School to observe its breakfast nutrition program, physical activity workshop, "Rethink Your Drink" nutrition course and more. In the afternoon, Concannon will tour the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) site at the Behavioral Health and Nutrition Services Center in Desert Hot Springs where he'll see firsthand the Best Practices Wellness Fair, peer counseling program, and community action partnership.

To conclude his tour, Concannon will head over to the Desert Hot Springs Health and Wellness Center to observe the "Ready, Set, Swim" program and tour the facility.

The "Ready, Set, Swim" program was introduced in 2015 as a free, fun and innovative way to combine physical activity, nutrition education and water safety into one, impactful program for third graders.

The program is an eight-day afterschool class at the community wellness center and pool. Children attend two hours a day over the course of two weeks with one hour focused on swimming skills and physical activity, and the second hour focused on nutrition education. The courses are led by the Desert Healthcare District, the Boys and Girls Club of Palm Springs and the Riverside Department of Public Health.

In it's first year, a total of 471 children from Palm Springs Unified graduated from the program. A number of parents whose children participated in the program noted that their child has become more active, selective about what they eat and drink and are more confident in their swimming skills as a result.

About Desert Healthcare District
The Desert Healthcare District is a local government agency that has been committed to the health of its 230,000 residents for more than 65 years. The District believes every resident in its territory, the cities of Palm Springs, Desert Hot Springs, Rancho Mirage, Thousand Palms, Cathedral City, Mountain Center and Palm Desert, deserves access to health education, disease prevention and comprehensive diagnostic and treatment services, and the opportunity to participate in District matters through access and input to the board. The District supports positive health system change via incorporating best-practice methodologies where possible; encouraging accurate outcome measurement by benchmarking, monitoring and evaluation; supporting innovative new practices and programs; and fostering collaboration and partnerships.