Health Advocates Call on Coca-Cola to Radically Change Advertising
Campaign pushes for Coca-Cola to become an ally

In a new television advertising campaign parodying Coca-Cola, Howard County Unsweetened is calling on the beverage industry giant to find a “better way” to help fight childhood obesity, diabetes and other diseases.

“While Coca-Cola produces scores of healthy beverages, it spends over two thirds of its marketing budget promoting sugary drinks,” said Nikki Highsmith Vernick, President and CEO of the Horizon Foundation. “We’re asking Coke, and all other beverage companies, to work with us – not against us – and invest in the long-term health of their customers by promoting their better, healthier beverages.”

Beginning next week, the hard-hitting $40,000-advertising campaign will begin airing on broadcast and cable networks throughout the Baltimore region during the months of October and November. It will also be spread through social media including facebook and Twitter.

The 30- and 90-second spots promote the campaign’s Better Beverage Finder, a web tool designed to help consumers find a low- or no-sugar beverage that fits their lifestyle and taste.

The advertising campaign was announced on Tuesday by the Horizon Foundation and its partners including MedChi, the Maryland State Medical Society, the American Heart Association, and People Acting Together in Howard (PATH), with support from the Yale University Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity, Center for Science in the Public Interest and others involved with the Howard County Unsweetened campaign. These partnerships highlight the broad medical consensus about the links between sugary drinks and obesity, diabetes, and other diseases.

Dr. Brian Avin, immediate past president of MedChi said, “MedChi and the health care community are striving to promulgate good health and prevent self induced illness by promoting healthy choices in our schools and in our communities. To accomplish this we need to educate the public and obtain the cooperation and support from corporate America. The doctors of Maryland are giving all beverage companies a prescription for change. Change your current marketing approach. Advertise your healthier drinks and not the beverages that lead to diabetes, obesity and hypertension.”

Reverend Robert Turner, clergy co-chair of PATH remarked, “Coke is the industry leader. It can find a better way. Coke can redeem itself. So today, the faith community asks Coca-Cola to flip its advertising and promote drinks that are healthier for children and their families.”