

Coca-Cola and UNC: *A history of partnership*

The relationship between The Coca-Cola Company and UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health stretches back more than fifteen years. Beginning in 1994, ten years of support from the company enabled James Swenberg, DVM, PhD, Kenan Distinguished Professor of environmental sciences and engineering, to greatly advance his work on DNA damage and repair.

“Our unrestricted grants from Coca-Cola permitted my laboratory to conduct pilot projects on new research ideas,” recalls Swenberg, who also directs the School’s Center for Environmental Health and Susceptibility.

More recently, The Coca-Cola Company supported another School priority, safe water, through projects in Mexican schools and in Cambodia, led by Mark Sobsey, PhD, Kenan Distinguished Professor of environmental sciences and engineering. The company also has participated in UNC’s Global Obesity Business Forum, led by Barry Popkin, PhD, Carla Smith Chamblee Professor of Global Nutrition. The forum brought together food industry leaders and researchers to find solutions to the obesity crisis.

“Obesity is a serious and complex global health problem that requires the collective efforts of everyone – individuals, governments, academia, health professionals, communities and businesses – to work in partnership to develop workable solutions,” says Rhona Applebaum, PhD, vice president and chief scientific and regulatory officer of The Coca-Cola Company.

“Partnerships with institutions like UNC, efforts to educate and inform consumers on proper nutrition, energy balance and programs that support physical activity are some of the many ways we are developing workable solutions for obesity,” Applebaum says.

For example, Coca-Cola partners with the Boys & Girls Clubs of America in support of Triple Play, a national after-school program that promotes healthy and active lifestyle choices among youth. The first youth-focused program of its kind developed in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Triple Play reaches more than four million children every year.

Globally, The Coca-Cola Company supports more than 100 physical activity and nutrition education programs in more than 150 countries.