



## **DRAFT RELEASE**

Contact: Julie Atherton  
JAM Media Collective  
julie@jamcollective.net  
415-839-7546

## **KEEN officially proclaims "Recess Is Back"**

*Outdoor company is starting a movement to reinstate recess,  
citing research on improved performance and well-being*

**Portland, OR – March 29, 2011** – Confined to an office cube? Working overtime? Constantly on call and online? Multitasking while trying to multitask? It's time to reclaim playtime and escape to the outdoors for a much-needed break. KEEN Footwear officially proclaims, "Recess Is Back."

At a time when the people are moving further into the digital age, becoming more disconnected from the outdoors, and the nation is experiencing rapidly increasing rates of obesity, access to the outdoors can help foster mental, reduce stress and physical health and reverse the obesity epidemic according to the America's Great Outdoors Initiative, an initiative launched by President Obama to develop a 21st-century conservation and recreation agenda.

In light of this encouraging finding, KEEN Footwear, the eight-year-old manufacturer of hybrid footwear, socks and bags, asked, "Can a brand be a solution for today's hectic world?" Their answer was, "Yes!" To that end the young brand is launching an initiative to improve the health of individuals by enabling them to take daily outdoor "recess" breaks.

"We want to liberate the masses from indoors and make recess as common as casual Friday," said James Curleigh, CEO and chief recess officer of KEEN. "In the time when screens are off and phones are silenced, the world is a happier place. If we start small with just 15 minutes a day, the world may become a better place one recess at a time."

### **Research Reveals Benefits of Recess**

The benefits of physical activity are numerous and well-documented (<http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/health/index.html>). National organizations such as, the President's Council on Fitness, Sports, and Nutrition; the National Recreation and Park Association; and the Partnership for a Healthier America are active partners on the physical activity train.

Recent studies in the work place conducted by Toni Yancey, author of *Instant Recess* and co-director of the Center for Health Equity and professor of health services at UCLA and her colleagues show that taking short activity breaks during

the workday, the time KEEN refers to as recess, is great for an individual's health and well-being.<sup>1,2</sup>

"Short bouts of physical activity can lead to an entire range of health benefits from lifting mood, helping prevent or control depression, to improving productivity, partly through changes to our cognitive processing." Yancey said. "It helps prevent cardiovascular disease and diabetes. It helps to control our weight. Really, there almost nothing that it doesn't improve."

According to a recent review, daily physical activity accumulated in short intervals may be more feasible and appealing to the relatively sedentary population than longer periods of activity. Integrating short durations of exercise into the workday produces improvements in outcomes related to work performance and clinical disease outcomes.<sup>3</sup>

Should these short periods of activity be indoors or outdoors? Research points toward the door. A study recently published in the review *Environmental Science & Technology* (March, 2011) states, that being active in natural environments rather than indoors was associated with higher levels of revitalization and positive engagement.<sup>4</sup>

Nicolaas P. Pronk Ph.D, president of the International Association for Worksite Health Promotion, was asked to provide his recommendations for worksite for the National Physical Activity Plan.<sup>5</sup> Pronk's recommendations state that multi-component worksite programs that include or promote physical activity generate positive improvements in health, reduce missed days of work and may generate a higher financial return.

KEEN has embraced this recommendation and substantiating research and is promoting a two-pronged approach to bring recess back. The first avenue will be to provide a set of tools that inspire and enable individuals to get outside daily; the second includes outreach to companies encouraging them to embrace recess.

## **Bringing the Movement to the Masses**

Starting close to home in Portland, Oregon KEEN has reworked its workplace to put the recess theory to the test. "At the KEEN headquarters, we've created an open door policy, meaning we open the doors and encourage everyone to get outside for a 15-minute break," said Kate Lee, global director of human resources at KEEN.

The company is creating a Recess Center to encourage play during the day which includes a recess tracker to show time in minutes, hours, days and months spent at recess, a detailed map of nearby recess spots, a place to let employees share their tips for taking recess and favorite recess activities, and recess items such as Frisbees, yoga mats, and bikes. There will be a Recess Team to rally other employees to play, and managers will be equipped with whistles and recess passes to encourage employees to get outside.

This spring, KEEN and its Recess Team are approaching other companies to join the Recess Revolution. Come summer, KEEN will bring the Recess Revolution to cities

around the U.S. including the San Francisco Bay Area, Minneapolis, Denver, and Washington D.C. through a series of events and promotions. The summer's recess activities include taking over sidewalks in Denver for a chalk art exhibitions and installing adult-friendly tire swings throughout Minneapolis.

To help individuals get outside and enjoy recess KEEN offers an online toolkit complete with recess passes, screen savers and downloadable door hangers promoting recess breaks. In partnership with Parents magazine, the brand is releasing a smart phone app that locates the closest park. In addition, KEEN will use social media channels to host photo contests and promotions to allow people to share recess adventures, as well as offering the chance to win the ultimate recess give-a-way outfitting a family with recess ready shoes, bags and socks for every season.

"We are an eight-year-old company that wants everyone to experience the freedom they felt as an eight-year-old at recess," said Phyllis Grove, VP of marketing for KEEN. "We want to enable people to bring more healthy habits, work-life balance and outdoor fun into their lives through this movement to reinstate recess. We invite you to put on your KEENs, get outside and reclaim play. *Recess is back!*"

For additional details about Recess Is Back and to join the Recess Revolution, visit [keenfootwear.com/recess](http://keenfootwear.com/recess).

[Links to studies cited in release](#)

[Links to KEEN social networks](#)

[Link to KEEN recess tool kit](#)

## **About KEEN**

KEEN Inc., manufacturer of hybrid footwear, socks and bags, is an outdoor brand that delivers innovative hybrid products, enabling outdoor enthusiasts to live an active lifestyle. Founded in 2003, KEEN was first recognized for its Newport sandal, which featured patented toe protection technology. Since then the company has been recognized for outstanding trail and casual products, and in 2010 was named one of "America's Best Places to Work" by Outside Magazine.

The company strives to demonstrate integrity and leadership, especially on social and environmental commitments, while promoting a vibrant, inclusive community that attracts all kinds of outdoor enthusiasts. Through its giving program Hybrid.Care, KEEN supports a variety of social and environmental organizations around the globe.

Based in Portland, Oregon, KEEN products are available in more than 5,000 retail locations in more than 50 countries – including the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Asia, Central America, South America and Europe. To learn more, visit [www.keenfootwear.com](http://www.keenfootwear.com).

Keep up with the ways KEEN is creating possibilities, reimagining the outdoors and caring for the world around us through the KEEN HybridLife Community by following us on Twitter (@Keen) and Facebook ([facebook.com/keeninc](https://facebook.com/keeninc)).

1. Yancey AK, McCarthy WJ, Taylor WC, Merlo A, Gewa C, Weber MD, Fielding JE. *The Los Angeles Lift Off: a sociocultural environmental change intervention to integrate physical activity into the workplace. Prev Med.* 2004 Jun;38(6):848-56.
2. Lara A, Yancey AK, Tapia-Conye R, Flores Y, Kuri-Morales P, Mistry R, Subirats E, McCarthy WJ. *Pausa para tu Salud: reduction of weight and waistlines by integrating exercise breaks into workplace organizational routine. Prev Chronic Dis.* 2008 Jan;5(1):A12.
3. Barr-Anderson DJ, AuYoung M, Whitt-Glover MC, Glenn BA, Yancey AK. *Am. Integration of short bouts of physical activity into organizational routine: a systematic review of the literature. J. Prev. Med* 2011 Jan; 40(1): 76-93
4. Thompson Coon J, Boddy K, Stein K, Whear R, Barton J, Depledge MH. *Does participating in physical activity in outdoor natural environments have a greater effect on physical and mental wellbeing than physical activity indoors? A systematic review. Environ Sci Technol.* 2011 Mar 1;45(5):1761-72.
5. Nicolaas P. Pronk, *Physical activity promotion in business and industry: evidence, context, and recommendations for a national plan. Journal of Physical Activity and Health*, 2009, 6 (Suppl 2), S220–S235