

# Tulane University's PRC Receives Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Grant to Combat Childhood Obesity

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The Prevention Research Center (PRC) at Tulane University has been awarded a \$360,000 grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) to improve opportunities for physical activity for children and families in New Orleans. Based on a rigorous selection process that drew more than 500 proposals from across the country, New Orleans is one of 41 sites selected for the RWJF Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities initiative.

In New Orleans, where approximately 20 percent of the population is under 18, and 33.5 percent of high school students are either overweight or obese, reshaping environments to make it easier for youth to be physically active in their daily lives is critical. The established KidsWalk coalition will significantly increase the number of children who participate in active transportation to school and who utilize play spaces after school by improving walking and biking infrastructure in New Orleans.

"The KidsWalk coalition recognizes the need to improve the physical environment in New Orleans, and is inspired by the opportunity to develop healthier neighborhoods by improving the roads that connect communities," said Kathryn Parker-Karst, assistant director of the Tulane PRC and director of the Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities initiative. "Children will be active if given a safe dedicated space to do so, and with roughly 30 percent of families lacking transportation, the opportunity to walk or bike to school is invaluable."

"To reverse this epidemic, communities are going to have to rally around their kids and provide the opportunities they need to be healthy," said Dr. Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, president and CEO of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. "Through this project, the Tulane University PRC and its partners are doing what it takes to make sure children lead better lives."

Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities is a \$33 million national program and RWJF's largest investment to date in community-based solutions to childhood obesity. With nine Leading Sites chosen in late 2008, the program now spans 50 communities from Seattle to Puerto Rico. All are targeting improvements in local policies and their community environment—changes that research indicates could have the greatest impact on healthier eating, more active living and obesity prevention. Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities is a cornerstone of RWJF's \$500 million commitment to reverse the country's childhood obesity epidemic by 2015.

A complete list of the 40 other cities and regions just announced as Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities sites is available online at [www.healthykidshealthycommunities.org](http://www.healthykidshealthycommunities.org)

All were selected because of strong vision, partnership and a commitment to make lasting change in their communities. The new program grants will continue through June 2013.

## **About Prevention Research Center at Tulane University**

Founded in 1998, the Prevention Research Center (PRC) at Tulane University studies the impact of the physical and social environments on obesity and collaborates with community partners through policy, education and communication strategies to build healthier communities in New Orleans and

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beyond. The Tulane PRC is one of 35 centers funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Visit [www.sph.tulane.edu/prc](http://www.sph.tulane.edu/prc) to learn more about the PRC's research and programs.

### **About Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities**

Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities, a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), advances community-based solutions that will help reverse the childhood obesity epidemic. It focuses on changing policies and environments to support active living and healthy eating among children and families. The program places special emphasis on reaching children who are at highest risk for obesity on the basis of income, race/ethnicity and geographic location. It will support RWJF's efforts to reverse the childhood obesity epidemic in the United States by 2015.

The Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities national program office is housed at Active Living By Design, part of the North Carolina Institute for Public Health at the Gillings School of Global Public Health at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. Established in 2001 as an RWJF national program, Active Living By Design now serves funders and partnerships across the country that are fostering community-led change to build a culture of active living and healthy eating.

### **About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation**

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans, the Foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change. For more than 35 years, the Foundation has brought experience, commitment, and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those it serves. When it comes to helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, the Foundation expects to make a difference in your lifetime. For more information, visit [www.rwjf.org](http://www.rwjf.org).