

Making Inroads in Fight Against Childhood Obesity

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The Prevention Research Center at Tulane has been awarded a \$360,000 grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation 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 Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities initiative.



The Prevention Research Center at Tulane wants to improve New Orleans' walking and biking infrastructure to increase physical activities for families. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

In New Orleans, about 20 percent of the population is under 18, and 33.5 percent of high school students are either overweight or obese.

By improving the walking and biking infrastructure in New Orleans, 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.

"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 [Prevention Research Center](#) 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 Prevention Research Center 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 the foundation's largest investment to date in community-based solutions to childhood obesity. The program now spans 50 communities from Seattle to Puerto Rico.