



# *Press Release*

**Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department**

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## **Chattanooga, Tennessee One of 41 Sites Selected for National Program to Fight Childhood Obesity**

The Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department Receives Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Major Grant to Improve Access to Physical Activity Opportunities and Healthy Food Access in the East and South Side Communities of Chattanooga.

Chattanooga, January 12, 2010 – The Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department/Step ONE program has been awarded a \$360,000 grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) to improve opportunities and access for physical activity and healthy eating in the East and South Side communities of Chattanooga. Based on a rigorous selection process that drew more than 500 proposals from across the country, Chattanooga, Tennessee is one of 41 sites selected for the RWJF Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities initiative.

The Grow Healthy Together Chattanooga (GHTC) partnership will focus the resources of lead agency Step ONE (Optimize with Nutrition and Exercise) and key allies in the effort to eliminate childhood obesity in the high-risk communities of East and South Chattanooga. Nearly 30% of East and South Chattanooga's 33,000 residents live in poverty. Seventy-one percent of the predominantly African-American population is overweight or obese. Nearly 30% are physically inactive and only 21.9% consume five or more servings of fruits and vegetables daily. Yet these communities also have a healthy grassroots infrastructure including well-organized neighborhoods and community-based organizations ready to provide leadership to a collaborative effort to reduce childhood obesity.

“By identifying strategic efforts to target childhood obesity in Chattanooga, our partnership will provide children in our community with the essential tools needed to stay healthy throughout their lives,” says John Bilderback, Step ONE Program Manager. “We are so pleased that the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has recognized a need in our community and is committed to helping implement necessary changes to improve the lives of our children.”

“To reverse this epidemic, communities are going to have to rally around their kids and provide the opportunities they need to be healthy,” said Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, M.D., M.B.A., president and CEO of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. “Through this project, the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Health Department 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.

The 40 other cities and regions just announced as Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities sites are:

Benton County, OR	Kingston, NY
Boone and Newton Counties, AR	Knoxville, TN
Buffalo, NY	Lake Worth, Greenacres and Palm Springs, FL
Caguas, PR	Milledgeville, GA
Charleston, WV	Milwaukee, WI
Hamilton County, OH	Moore and Montgomery Counties, NC
Cook County, GA	Multnomah County, OR
Cuba, NM	Nash and Edgecombe Counties, NC
Denver, CO	New Orleans, LA
Desoto, Marshall and Tate Counties, MS	Omaha, NE
Duval County, FL	Philadelphia, PA
El Paso, TX	Phoenix, AZ
Fitchburg, MA	Rancho Cucamonga, CA
Flint, MI	Rochester, NY
Greenville, SC	San Antonio, TX
Houghton County, MI	San Felipe Pueblo, NM
Houston, TX	Silver City, NM
Jackson, MS	Spartanburg, SC
Jefferson County, AL	Watsonville and Parajo Valley, CA
Kane County, IL	
Kansas City, MO	

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. Visit [www.healthykidshealthycommunities.org](http://www.healthykidshealthycommunities.org) to learn more about these communities’ work and plans.

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### **About the Grow Healthy Together Chattanooga (GHTC) partnership**

The Grow Healthy Together Chattanooga (GHTC) partnership will focus the resources of the lead agency, Step ONE (Optimize with Nutrition and Exercise), and key allies in the effort to eliminate childhood obesity in the high-risk communities of East and South Chattanooga. The partnership will work closely with Eastside community partner Eastside Taskforce and Southside community partner Alton Park Development Corporation. Rounding out the GHTC coalition are the Chattanooga Parks and Recreation Department, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga Health and Human Performance Department, Regional Planning Agency, Crabtree Farms, Hamilton County Extension Office, Ochs Center for Metropolitan Studies, and Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce.

### **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).