



UNM Health Sciences Center News Release

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Cuba, NM One of 41 Sites Selected for National Program to Fight Childhood Obesity

The UNM Prevention Research Center (UNM PRC) has been awarded a \$360,000 grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) to improve opportunities for physical activity and access to affordable healthy foods for children and families in Cuba, NM.

Based on a rigorous selection process that drew more than 500 proposals from across the country, Cuba, New Mexico is one of 41 sites selected for the RWJF *Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities* initiative.

In and around Cuba, New Mexico where over 30% of the tri-ethnic population is under 20 years old, partners including the UNM PRC, the Nacimiento Medical Foundation, the Step Into Cuba Alliance, the Mayor and City Council of Cuba and the Cuba Independent School District will work together to improve the lives of children by increasing access to fresh healthy food and safe places to walk and play. They will work collaboratively to encourage routine, daily physical activity among children by improving the safety and walkability of Cuba's main street, providing safe walking routes to school and increasing opportunities for safe play spaces.

They will also work to encourage healthy food choices by increasing opportunities to purchase and grow fresh healthy produce. A lack of transportation, long travel distances, limited access to recreational facilities and fresh produce, language and cultural barriers, a harsh climate, and high unemployment contribute to disparities in health status among the children and families in Cuba and the surrounding areas and put many at risk for obesity and diabetes .

Improving the availability of and access to healthy food choices for children and creating safe places for them to walk and play could increase the likelihood that they will enjoy good health and the promise of a healthy future. This reward reflects the success of an ongoing partnership between the UNM PRC and the Village of Cuba.

"Resources from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation will help us develop the local infrastructure needed to accomplish our objective of creating a healthier community for our children. We hope to reverse the trend of overweight, sedentary living and diabetes that we observe in our children and youth." Richard Kozoll, MD, MPH, a local physician and Volunteer Coordinator for the Step Into Cuba Alliance.

"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 University of New Mexico 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 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.

About the University of New Mexico Prevention Research Center New Mexico's Prevention Research Center, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) since 1995, is committed to increasing quality and years of healthy life, eliminating health disparities, and reducing the burden of chronic disease and injury by engaging in evidence-based prevention research. Our research and scholarship involves community engagement and partnership, communication, dissemination, training, and evaluation activities, and translation of these activities into programs, practice, and policy. In response to community needs to reduce the burden of diabetes and cardiovascular disease we have focused much of our research on nutrition, physical activity, and obesity prevention . For more information, visit <http://hsc.unm.edu/chpdp/>.

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 FoundationThe 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.

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