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Children's Hospital & Medical Center Awards Preventing Childhood Obesity Grants to Community Partners

Omaha, Neb. – Children's Hospital & Medical Center has named 10 regional non-profit organizations as Preventing Childhood Obesity (PCO) Community Grant winners for 2021-2022. Each organization receives \$25,000 to support new or existing programs that focus on childhood obesity prevention and improving the health of children and teens.

Started in 2014, this grant program was set in place to support organizations using evidence-based programs to reduce childhood obesity. The PCO grant program also supports health equity, selecting programs that reach at-risk children from low-income, racial or ethnic minority groups or other marginalized populations. The programs selected focus on nutrition, physical activity, health education and other obesity-prevention measures.

“Childhood obesity continues to be a top health concern for parents in Omaha and across Nebraska. We are honored to be able to provide these grants again this year,” said Holly Dingman, director of Children's Center for the Child & Community. “These 10 grants will be instrumental in helping more than 23,000 kids across the region in 42 locations, which is a true demonstration of the organization's leadership and commitment to the health of all community children.”

All grantees will also participate in a Learning Collaborative designed and hosted by Children's Center for the Child & Community and Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition. The collaborative learning sessions will support implementation and evaluation of evidence-based approaches for childhood obesity prevention and fostering collaboration and sharing of best practices among grantees.

Grant recipients include:

CEDARS Youth Services

CEDARS Youth Services is launching the Happy Healthy Kids project. With this project, CEDARS Youth Services will enhance their current curriculum by incorporating healthy food and physical activity lessons in weekly early childcare plans, promoting physical activity through soccer instruction and physical wellness classes and the addition of twice-weekly physical activity. The project will also work to increase access to healthy food by coordinating with the Food Bank – Lincoln Fresh to ensure healthy food truck stops are in the neighborhood, as well as increase family engagement around healthy food options by hosting regular family events.

Completely KIDS

Completely KIDS will be launching the Fit KIDS Gardening, Cooking and Physical Activity program. This program will be implemented in five of the organization's 15 community and school sites, impacting primarily underserved minority children in south and east Omaha. The program will provide weekly virtual cooking and nutrition classes for children and their caregivers, with meal kits delivered to participating families. In addition, after-school program clubs and a Bike Club will be offered at the headquarter site.

Educare Lincoln

Educare Lincoln will launch the Healthy Lifestyles Project. Through this project, they will co-host weekly food markets with Belmont Elementary and develop community-based interventions by establishing an on-site, family garden. It will work with food services to create a six-week menu incorporating produce from the gardens and other means. The project will also develop a plan for regular staff training and development on nutrition and quarterly parent engagement activities related to healthy eating.

Girls Inc. Omaha

Girls Inc. will be launching the program Farm to Table Fresh, Healthy Foods for Girls in two Omaha Locations. The program will use an evidence-based, three-pronged strategy to increase access to healthy foods, including fruits and vegetables, in community settings for children. The program will work to reduce or eliminate fried, processed and high-sugar foods from the Girls Inc. meal and snack program. It will also work to develop partnerships with local farmers and growers to source local fruits and vegetables, in addition to field trips where girls can visit farms and markets to learn about different kinds of food and where they come from.

Hastings Family YMCA

The Hastings Family YMCA will be implementing the Building Healthy Families Project. The goal of this project is to equip children and families with tools and accountability to reduce their weight, increase their physical activity and decrease their "red food" (unhealthy food) consumption. This will be done by implementing the University of Nebraska Kearney's Building Healthy Families evidence-based curriculum.

Latino Center of the Midlands

The Latino Center of the Midlands will be launching the Club de Niños Saludables or the Latino Center's Healthy Kids Club. The program preventively addresses health inequities and disparities by providing a safe and enriching environment for the children of working parents who are not able to afford childcare. The club will provide health classes to children when they are at an age of forming dietary habits and exploring different sports and physical activities.

Lincoln Public Schools

Lincoln Public Schools will be implementing a program that installs water bottle refilling stations in 22 schools. The goal of this program is to increase hydration and water availability for students in schools with limited resources and significantly diverse student populations.

Nebraska Appleseed

Nebraska Appleseed will be implementing the project Fighting Child Hunger, which includes expanding summer meals. The project will focus on launching summer meal sites in at least three target communities, as well as working to support statewide efforts to promote a deeper understanding of equity and food service among administrators and sponsors, encouraging best practices and conducting general outreach.

OneWorld Community Health Center

The OneWorld Community Health Center in Omaha will be launching a program to improve breastfeeding care and education for WIC clients. Through the program, all staff will receive training in motivational interviewing to help better understand and address client concerns related to breastfeeding and healthy habits. Program dietitians will complete Certified Lactation Counselor training and a Certificate of Training in Obesity for Pediatrics and Adults. OneWorld WIC clients will be able to attend breastfeeding support classes in either an English or Spanish language format, in addition to individual breastfeeding counseling with a Certified Lactation Counselor.

YMCA of Greater Omaha

The YMCA of Greater Omaha will be implementing Go NAP SACC Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child-Care (NAPSACC) best practices for nutrition and physical activity in five of their Early Learning Centers serving diverse populations. Implementing Go NAP SACC, these sites will enhance policies and practices for healthy child development through assessment, program planning and training.

“We are very grateful to the leaders at these community organizations and their partners,” Dingman added. “We know this important work is going to make a huge difference in the lives of children and families across the region.”

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About Children’s Hospital & Medical Center

Children’s Hospital & Medical Center is the only full-service, pediatric health care center in Nebraska, providing expertise in more than 50 pediatric specialty services to children across a five-state region and beyond. Children’s is home to Nebraska’s only Level IV regional Newborn Intensive Care Unit and the state’s only Level II Pediatric Trauma Center. A regional heart center, it also offers expertise in pediatric heart transplantation. Children’s is recognized as a 2021-22 Best Children’s Hospital by U.S. News & World Report in four pediatric specialties: Cardiology & Heart Surgery, Gastroenterology & GI Surgery, Pulmonology & Lung Surgery and Urology. Visit us online at ChildrensOmaha.org.