

Charleston Gazette

January 12, 2010

Kanawha awarded grant to fight childhood obesity

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- KEYS 4 HealthyKids, a local collective aimed at healthy living, will receive a \$360,000 grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to improve physical activity and access to affordable, healthy foods for children and families across Kanawha County.

Charleston was selected as one of 41 sites to be a part of the Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities initiative to fight childhood obesity. The money will be used to emphasize healthy eating habits, including more fruits and vegetables; encourage more interest in farmers markets; revitalize community centers and other play spaces; and enlist community members to make their communities safer places to walk and play outdoors, among other things.

The money will be awarded to the community over a period of four years, and will be used by affiliates of KEYS 4 HealthyKids, including the Kanawha-Charleston Health Department, among others.

In Kanawha County, 47 percent of predominately low-income children are overweight or obese. Not only do these children face health issues, such as higher rates of type-2 diabetes and heart disease, but they also incur higher medical costs and are generally less productive in school, according to information from Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities.

The initial focus will be on at-risk youth and families in the West Side and East End of Charleston, and will eventually expand to other Kanawha County communities.

The RWJF focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing the United States and is the nation's largest philanthropy organization devoted exclusively to improving the health of Americans. Healthy Kids, Health Communities is a cornerstone to the RWJF's \$500 million commitment to reverse the county's childhood obesity epidemic by 2015.