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Kentucky Youth Advocates Receives \$100,000 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Grant to Increase Assets to Promote Healthy Families in Kentucky

Jeffersontown, KY - Kentucky Youth Advocates has been awarded a [Roadmaps to Health Community Grant](#) of \$100,000 by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) to improve the long-term health of people in Kentucky by advocating for the implementation and improvement of two state-level tax credits for working families, a state-level Earned Income Tax Credit, and the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit. Both tax credits will provide working families with additional income support to help them close the gap between what they earn and what it takes to make ends meet – a proven strategy to improve public health outcomes. The grant will support a two-year project to implement a campaign with three objectives—to build crucial support among policymakers; to increase public awareness of the issue; and to engage grassroots advocates.

The 12 *Roadmaps to Health* Community Grants, which support two-year state and local efforts among policymakers, business, education, health care, public health and community organizations, will be managed by Community Catalyst and are part of the *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps* program, a collaboration of RWJF and the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute (UWPHI).

“These projects are really exciting for two reasons: first, they are truly collaborations among diverse community partners who bring expertise, relationships and resources to improve people’s health; and second, that in addition to health behaviors such as smoking and diet, they are focused on factors such as education, family relationships and income that heavily influence our health and quality of life,” said James S. Marks, MD, MPH, senior vice president and director of the Health Group at RWJF.

“Kentucky Youth Advocates has long been a proponent of improving economic policies for families, and promoting child health throughout the state,” said Tara Grieshop-Goodwin, deputy director of Kentucky Youth Advocates. “We know income can impact health, and we are excited to have the opportunity to combine our economic well-being efforts with our health work and look forward to fostering partnerships between advocates from both disciplines throughout the state.”

Kentucky is one of the poorest states in the country, ranking 47th in total poverty among the 50 states and District of Columbia and its rates of obesity, diabetes and asthma are among the highest in the nation. The goal of this project is to improve the health of Kentucky families by building state-wide support for tax policies that will help low-income, working families retain more of their income—money

that can then be spent on health improvements, like regular doctor's visits, healthier diets, and weight-loss or smoking cessation services.

"The Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky works to address the unmet health care needs of Kentuckians and it's clear that a family's income, education, and neighborhood impact their health. This initiative provides an exciting opportunity for health and economic well-being advocates across the state to promote health outcomes and asset-building strategies for families. Hopefully we can all work together to build a stronger, healthier future for Kentuckians," said Dr. Susan Zepeda, President/CEO of the Foundation for a Health Kentucky.

Kentucky Youth Advocates and other grantees will build on the UWPHI's *County Health Rankings* model, which highlights the critical role that factors such as education, jobs and our environment play in influencing how healthy people are and how long they live. The *Roadmaps to Health* grantees are working to create healthier places to live, learn, work and play. Taken together, the *Rankings* and the actions of the *Roadmaps to Health* grantees are a way of solving our nation's health crisis.

"The churches who work together for the good of Kentucky are concerned about the stress on families. We believe there is a special place in God's heart for families struggling to meet their most basic needs. We will do our part by bringing the goals of this KYA initiative to the attention of people of faith," said the Rev. Marian Taylor, executive director of the Kentucky Council of Churches.

The grantees will build consensus for and implement policy and systems changes that address the factors that we know are connected to health – education, income and employment, community safety and social connectedness. Community Catalyst, a national consumer health advocacy organization, will use its expertise and successful advocacy framework of coalition building, grassroots mobilization, policy research analysis, campaign design and implementation, and communications and media strategies to help each grantee group achieve results, including policy and systemic changes.

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[Kentucky Youth Advocates](#) is a non-partisan, non-profit children's advocacy organization. KYA represents a voice for Kentucky's most precious asset – its youth. We believe that Kentucky's youth deserve the opportunities and resources necessary to ensure their productive development and health.

[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 health and health care, the Foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, measureable and timely change. For nearly 40 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.

Community Catalyst is a national non-profit consumer advocacy organization dedicated to quality affordable health care for all. Community Catalyst works in partnership with national, state and local organizations, policymakers, and foundations, providing leadership and support to improve the health of communities and to change the health care system so it serves everyone. For more information, visit www.communitycatalyst.org. Read or comment on our blog at <http://blog.communitycatalyst.org>. Follow us on Twitter @healthpolicyhub.