

School's Active Living by Design program awarded grant to support healthy communities initiative

ACTIVE LIVING BY DESIGN WAS TAPPED IN February 2008 by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to lead Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities, a new five-year, \$44-million program, to help underserved and vulnerable communities at greatest risk for childhood obesity plan for and implement changes in policies, systems and environments that increase opportunities for active living and healthy eating.

By the end of the grant period, Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities will work with up to 100 local communities across the country, says Sarah Strunk, director of Active Living by Design, a national initiative to create community environments that support healthy children, youth and families.

The program will focus on supporting multidisciplinary partnerships in their efforts to improve their communities, such as constructing or enhancing parks, trailways and greenways, changing or implementing policies to create more opportunities for active

transportation and healthier food options, and creating social norms to ensure that healthier choices become the easier choices.

“Our short-term goal is to seed projects around the country that demonstrate which policy and environmental changes help communities become healthier. Our long-term goal is to reduce the incidence of childhood obesity in communities that are hardest hit,” Strunk says.

Active Living by Design, part of the School's North Carolina Institute for Public

Health, was launched by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and now is funded by a variety of organizations. The program has been successful in helping local communities across the nation increase active living and healthy eating by focusing on systems, policies and environmental change strategies.

For more information on Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities, visit www.healthykidshealthycommunities.org. ■

— BY MARGARITA DE PANO



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