

Blue & You Foundation

For a Healthier Arkansas 
An Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association

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For Immediate Release

Blue & You Foundation and Arkansas Children's Hospital Co-Fund Research to Prevent Childhood Obesity

LITTLE ROCK, AR. (Sept. 7, 2007) – Concerned about the struggle to keep the state's youngest healthy and trim, the Blue & You Foundation for a Healthier Arkansas and Arkansas Children's Hospital are partnering on a project to help the state's researchers find solutions.

The organizations are co-funding two grants totaling \$159,000 to assist Arkansas researchers looking for the best methods to reverse obesity trends. Each organization is contributing half the funds awarded to the researchers.

“Childhood obesity continues to be a serious problem in Arkansas,” said Patrick O’Sullivan, executive director of the Blue & You Foundation. “Our goal with these two special grants is to identify specific programs that have the best results in reducing obesity in our children.”

The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) and the Arkansas Center for Health Improvement (ACHI) are the recipients of the first grant, worth \$50,000. ACHI Policy Advisor Ronald Kahn, M.D., and Carole Garner, M.P.H., R.D., L.D., an assistant professor in the department of Health Policy and Health Management in the College of Public Health at UAMS, will use the funds to review current research on evidence-based prevention of childhood obesity. The team will present a best practices report on their findings.

Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families is receiving the second grant, worth \$109,000. Arkansas Advocates Executive Director Rich Huddleston and Director of Health Policy Rhonda Sanders will spearhead an evaluation of current Arkansas programs that are effectively preventing childhood obesity. The project will result in a clearinghouse of information on successful programs and practices, a potential resource for organizations that wish to implement similar programs.

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“Both studies should produce information that will be valuable to schools, agencies and communities that wish to implement proven programs and to funding organizations that wish to make effective and prudent grant-making decisions related to childhood obesity,” said Jonathan Bates, M.D., president and chief executive officer of ACH.

The researchers will share their preliminary results in a statewide obesity conference to be organized by ACHI in May 2008. The summit's goal is to have health professionals, educators, policy makers and parents incorporate these research findings into a new action plan for combating the crisis of obesity among the state's youngest generation.

The grant-funded research begins this month, with final reports due in August of 2008. The grant opportunities were first announced in May, and the deadline for applications was July of this year.

The Blue & You Foundation, established in 2001 by Arkansas Blue Cross and Blue Shield, awards approximately \$1 million in grants annually to nonprofit or governmental organizations and programs that positively affect the health of Arkansans. In its first five years of operation, the foundation has awarded more than \$6.1 million to 86 health improvement programs in Arkansas. The foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization that serves the state of Arkansas, and is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. For more information, visit www.BlueAndYouFoundationArkansas.org.

Arkansas Children's Hospital is the only pediatric medical center in Arkansas and one of the largest in the United States serving children from birth to age 21. The campus spans 28 city blocks and houses 292 beds, a staff of approximately 500 physicians, 80 residents in pediatrics and pediatric specialties and more than 3,600 employees. The private, nonprofit healthcare facility boasts an internationally renowned reputation for medical breakthroughs and intensive treatments, unique surgical procedures and forward-thinking medical research - all dedicated to fulfilling our mission of enhancing, sustaining and restoring children's health and development. For more information, visit www.archildren.org.

The Arkansas Center for Health Improvement (ACHI) is a nonpartisan, independent health policy center dedicated to improving the health of Arkansans. It is jointly supported by the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, the Arkansas Department of Human Services and Arkansas Blue Cross and Blue Shield.

Founded in 1977, Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families is a nonprofit, nonpartisan child advocacy organization. Its mission is to ensure that every child has the resources and opportunities to lead healthy and productive lives and realize their full potential. The organization fulfills its mission by developing and implementing good public policy for children and their families through research, education, advocacy and coalition building.

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