

WILLIAMSBURG Health FOUNDATION

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Williamsburg Health Foundation's Latest Grants Create Health Opportunities for All

WILLIAMSBURG, VA –

In 2014 the Williamsburg Health Foundation adopted a new strategic plan with the vision of “Individuals making healthy choices in a community with health opportunities for all.” While “health opportunity” may be a new concept to the public, it is a not a new idea to those who study health.

“What we mean by health opportunity,” said Jeanne Zeidler, President and CEO, “is when the healthy choice is the easy choice. “

A great example of creating health opportunity is a Mobile Food Pantry that brings fresh produce and lean meats from the Virginia Peninsula Foodbank to communities in the Lackey area of York County. “Low-income communities in Lackey lack easy access grocery stores and transportation. The only way to make healthy food affordable and accessible is to get it there,” says Zeidler. “Our investment in the program is relatively small, only \$6,000, but that’s because so many partners make it happen, including the residents themselves who work to distribute the food.”

The Foundation also makes sure there are healthy foods easily accessible at public schools of Williamsburg-James City County. “If day after day for twelve or thirteen years, a child’s breakfasts and lunches at school are high in fat and sugar, he or she, through no fault of their own, has been set on a path towards a lifetime of obesity and preventable chronic illness. We want to give children the opportunity to live a healthy life.”

For that reason, the largest single grant of the Williamsburg Health Foundation is made to the School Health Initiative Program (SHIP), a health and wellness program focused on promoting and supporting healthy eating, physical

activity, and other health opportunities at Williamsburg-James City County Public Schools.

“SHIP doesn’t just teach nutrition, it makes sure there are healthier foods on the lunch line. And, it doesn’t just put healthier foods on the lunch line, it takes food carts around the cafeterias and gives children a chance to taste the healthier foods in the same way stores give out product samples. We don’t need studies to tell us that healthy habits learned by young can last a lifetime, but studies do confirm it” said Zeidler.

Another grant that takes aim at making children healthier is a grant to KaBOOM! to build a community playground in upper James City County. “We are excited to work with KaBOOM! again to build another community playground like the one built in Grove last September. Every child deserves a safe place to play.”

Sometimes the best health opportunities are not big programs and playgrounds but quieter, private efforts. Promoting breastfeeding among those moms who might not otherwise have the support they need to breastfeed successfully creates the health opportunity of a lifetime for babies. Research shows that babies who are breastfed have fewer and less serious illnesses than those who are not breast fed. For that reason, the foundation is funding a new breastfeeding support program at Child Development Resources (CDR).

“We are pleased to follow our new strategic direction to create greater health opportunity that will make ours a healthier community for both the short and long term. But, we also want to the community to know that we remain committed to helping those who need health care find the health care they need. Grants to support the work of local health clinics total over 1.6 million dollars” said Zeidler.

A full list of grantees, programs, and award amounts is attached here.

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