Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Announces $150,000 in Prizes for Groundbreaking Efforts to Improve Community Health

Six Collaborations Receive First Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Roadmaps to Health Prize

Princeton, N.J. (February 21, 2013)—The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) today announced the six inaugural winners of the RWJF Roadmaps to Health Prize. The prize honors outstanding community partnerships which are helping people live healthier lives. The six communities are Santa Cruz County, California; New Orleans, Louisiana; Cambridge, Massachusetts; Fall River, Massachusetts; Manistique, Michigan; and Minneapolis, Minnesota. The communities will each receive a cash prize of $25,000. Learn more about the RWJF Roadmaps to Health Prize winners and watch video profiles of each community at www.rwjf.org.

“These prize winners represent leadership at its finest—trailblazers creating a culture of health,” said Dr. Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, RWJF president and CEO. “Today we honor leaders from government, business, public health, health care, and education who stand shoulder-to-shoulder working toward better health. The RWJF Roadmaps to Health Prize shines a light on their accomplishments; we hope it will inspire others to take bold steps to improve health in their communities.”

The six RWJF Roadmaps to Health Prize winners were selected from more than 160 applicants. Winning communities were honored on February 20th at an event held at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in Princeton, New Jersey. Prize winners were chosen because of their innovative strategies to improve community health including:

- Working together to improve health equity in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Best known for its world-renowned universities, Cambridge is also a city that faces challenges like obesity and school readiness. It is a diverse community committed to working together to improve the health and well-being of all residents, of whom a quarter are foreign-born, a third are non-
white, and 15 percent live in poverty. Literacy ambassadors help kids from all backgrounds come to school ready to learn. The public schools offer innovative physical education classes (like ballroom dancing) and healthy meals that celebrate cultural diversity. School-based health services treat the “whole child.” The Men’s Health League addresses heart disease and type 2 diabetes among men of color.

- Empowering all people to play a role in the community’s health in **Manistique**, a small rural town in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. Partnering with the Sault Tribe Strategic Alliance for Health Project, this community is focusing on improving the health of the entire population by increasing the opportunity for healthy choices. The community is hosting a Farmer’s Market which serves many low-income families and also benefits local farmers; creating a non-motorized transportation plan to get everyone in the community out walking and biking safely; and instituting a coordinated school health plan to provide kids with healthy breakfasts and quality physical education.

- Making a collaborative investment in the health of young people in **Santa Cruz County, California**. Using their Community Assessment Project Report’s local data as a guide, public and private community partners have pinpointed areas where they can make the biggest difference. A local universal health insurance plan has provided coverage to 21,000 previously uninsured children; a youth-led healthy restaurant initiative spurred the approval of an ordinance that requires new restaurants and transportation stations to offer and highlight healthy options; a community-wide effort to curb high underage binge drinking helps law enforcement to keep youth drinking in check; and an alternative-to-incarceration program provides education, employment, treatment, and social services to get people's lives back on track.

- Transforming community health in **New Orleans, Louisiana**. In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, a cross-sector partnership of the City’s Health Department, schools, businesses, and nonprofit organizations has made public health and prevention a major component of the ongoing recovery effort. Successes in the Katrina-ravaged New Orleans East community include a full-service hospital, a 24-hour urgent-care facility, new athletic fields, and an indoor pool; a renewed focus on schools promoting academic achievement and good health—from new gardens and cooking classrooms to state-of-the-art kitchens and new physical activity programs; and the implementation of Fit NOLA, an initiative that strives to make New Orleans one of the fittest cities in America by its 300th anniversary in 2018.

- Creating healthier environments across **Minneapolis, Minnesota**. The City of Minneapolis and over 40 community organizations are implementing a comprehensive obesity and tobacco prevention initiative to increase physical activity, healthy eating, and smoke-free living. Highlights include smoke free multi-unit housing, corner stores that sell healthy produce, and a nationally-known infrastructure and culture of biking and walking. Recognizing the impact of economic opportunity and academic achievement on health, efforts also include projects like Venture North Bike and Coffee, which provides youth employment opportunities and bike sales/repair services in economically disadvantaged North Minneapolis. Programs in this community also include the Northside Achievement Zone, where families and children move through a “cradle to career” pipeline so that high-risk youth graduate from high school ready for college.
Tackling pressing health problems through a public, private, and non-profit partnership in Fall River, Massachusetts. Coalition members and the City have developed programs to reduce youth violence and help high school dropouts in Fall River develop job skills; worked alongside youth who advocated for a successful citywide ban on tobacco sales in pharmacies; and renovated a former mill building into a state-of-the-art multi-vendor health center for low-income people along the shore of the Quequechan River, an area where a walking path will soon be constructed to encourage physical activity.

The RWJF Roadmaps to Health Prize is awarded annually. The call for applications for year two of the prize will be released on March 20, 2013. Go to www.rwjf.org then for more information.

The RWJF Roadmaps to Health Prize is part of the County Health Rankings & Roadmaps program. In 2009, RWJF partnered with the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute to create the County Health Rankings. The Rankings—to be released on March 20, 2013—serve as an easy-to-use health snapshot of the many factors that influence health, and help community leaders identify areas where improvement is needed. The County Health Roadmaps project supports communities working together to make progress on those factors. Find out more at www.countyhealthrankings.org.

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About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
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, measurable, and timely change. For 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. Follow the Foundation on Twitter (@RWJF) and Facebook (facebook.com/RobertWoodJohnsonFoundation).

About the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute
The University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute is the focal point within the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health for translating public health and health policy research into practice. The Institute strives to:

- Address a broad range of real-world problems of topical importance to government, business, providers and the public;
- Promote partnerships of inquiry between researchers and users of research, breaking down barriers between the academic community and public and private sector policy makers; and
- Make useful contributions to public health and health policy decisions that improve the health of the public.

For more information, visit http://uwphi.pophealth.wisc.edu.