



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Grant Will Help Address Childhood Obesity Epidemic in Indiana**

Fort Wayne, IN (June 7, 2013) – The State Alliance of Indiana YMCA’s has been selected to participate in the YMCA’s Statewide Pioneering Healthier Communities (PHC) – an initiative aimed at addressing the childhood obesity epidemic through policy, systems and environmental change. The state of Indiana is one of 14 to receive funds from the YMCA of the USA, which was recently awarded nearly \$7.9 million from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) to expand the Statewide PHC initiative from six to a total of 21 states to focus on states with high rates of childhood obesity.

Launched in 2009 with a \$6.8 million grant from the RWJF, Statewide PHC addresses the childhood obesity epidemic through policy and environmental changes at the community and state level. Through Statewide PHC, the Y convenes state and community leaders to work together to implement strategies that support healthy living.

The Director for Healthy Living Initiatives, Brent Wake has been hired by the State Alliance of Indiana YMCA’s to carry out the project and will be supported by a statewide volunteer committee for PHC consisting of the following volunteers representing Indiana.

1. Marcie Memmer (Indiana State Department of Health) - Chair
2. Elizabeth Cierzniak (Faegre Baker Daniels, LLP)
3. Debra Close (Dukes Memorial Hospital)
4. Thomas Crouch (Greentree Real Estate Group)
5. Amy David (Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield)
6. Anne Graves (YMCA of Greater Indianapolis)
7. Joe LaRocca (YMCA of Southern Indiana)
8. David Lohrmann (Indiana University School of Public Health)
9. Hon. Blair Milo (Mayor, City of LaPorte)
10. Marty Pastura (YMCA of Greater Fort Wayne)
11. Brent Wake (State Alliance of Indiana YMCAs)
12. Lora Williams (Williams Law Office)

“The Y and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation have a mutual commitment to ensure our nation’s children grow to be healthy, happy and strong,” said YMCA of the USA President and Chief Executive Officer, Neil Nicoll. “Our work together over the past three years has resulted in community and state-level changes that will help children and their families live healthier lives for years to come. We are grateful to be able to continue this important relationship.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s CDC’s National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey from 2010, 16.9% of our nation’s children and adolescents aged two to 19 years old were obese. Among Indiana’s children aged 2 years to 5 years, 14.2% were obese and adolescents in grades 9 through 12, 12.8% were obese.

"YMCAs are one of the largest providers of early childhood and afterschool programs in the nation. Locally we operate more than 20 Early Childhood, Before and Afterschool Care sites. By focusing on initiatives that will help our kids make better food and activity choices, we are pursuing outcomes that will improve the health and wellness of area children," said Marty Pastura, President and CEO of the YMCA of Greater Fort Wayne. "We believe that lasting personal and social change can only come about when we all work together. By focusing our resources and addressing the challenges of childhood obesity, we will bring about change that will lead families toward better health as well as an improved quality of life."

Within 37 communities in six states, the Y's Statewide PHC has advanced over 2,300 strategies and changes to tackle this growing health crisis. To date, up to 2.3 million lives have been impacted through environmental changes such as making healthier meals possible by increasing access to fresh fruits and vegetables in more neighborhoods; creating safe walking routes to schools; working with schools to increase physical education and physical activity and by working with afterschool programs to provide additional opportunities outside the school day for physical activity.

"The Y is really good at energizing communities and empowering them to tackle comprehensive policy approaches," said John Govea, JD, MPA, senior program officer at RWJF. "As we all strive to reverse childhood obesity by 2015, the Y's collaborative approach, which helps turn local innovations into statewide efforts, will be critical." Statewide PHC is part of the Y's Healthier Communities Initiatives. In more than 220 communities across the nation, Ys are working in collaboration with other community leaders on an intentional effort to ensure that healthy living is within reach of the people who live in those communities.

Learn more about the Y's Healthier Communities Initiatives at [ymca.net/healthier-communities](http://ymca.net/healthier-communities).

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## **About the YMCA**

### ***About the Y***

The Y is one of the nation's leading nonprofit strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. Across the U.S., 2,700 Ys engage 21 million men, women and children – regardless of age, income or background – to nurture the potential of children and teens, improve the nation's health and well-being and provide opportunities to give back and support neighbors. Anchored in more than 10,000 communities, the Y has the long-standing relationships and physical presence not just to promise, but to deliver, lasting personal and social change. [ymca.net](http://ymca.net)

### ***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 improving the health and health care of all Americans, we work with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, measurable, and timely change. In 2007, the Foundation committed \$500 million toward its goal of reversing the childhood obesity epidemic by 2015. This is the largest commitment any foundation has made to the issue. 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. Follow the Foundation on [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#).