



**For Immediate Release**  
February 21, 2011

**Contact: Toniann Richard**  
**Office: 660.259.9019 Cell: 816.807.7774**  
**Toniann@HCCNetwork.org**

**The HCC of Lafayette County Awarded Social Innovation for Missouri  
Grant to Support Tobacco Cessation and Obesity Programs throughout County**  
**Lafayette County Health Department, MU-Extension,  
Lafayette County Farmers Market Association among Collaborative Partners**

**(Lexington, MO)** – The Missouri Foundation for Health (MFH) recently awarded the Health Care Coalition (HCC) of Lafayette County \$130,601 to address tobacco use and obesity in the County. The HCC will serve as the project coordinator for the Social Innovation for Missouri (SIM) grant and provide administrative management, while working alongside the Lafayette County Health Department, MU-Extension, Lafayette County Farmers Market, schools, local government and area employers to implement tobacco cessation and obesity prevention programs. The HCC is one of seven Missouri nonprofits recently awarded SIM grants.

“To be afforded the opportunity to work with our community to address these top issues is amazing,” said Toniann Richard, executive director of the HCC. “In rural areas tobacco abuse and obesity are growing concerns. The fact that our network partners are collaborating to address these concerns is a huge win for our community. We are so very appreciative of Missouri Foundation for Health’s investment in us and in this mission.”

This one-year award will be eligible for renewal based on performance. The SIM program represents the first opportunity for MFH to award grants outside its usual service region, which includes 84 Missouri counties and the City of St. Louis. “Partnering with the federal government to expand tested, community-based programs for smoking and obesity to more areas in Missouri is a tremendous opportunity for MFH and the population it serves,” said Dr. James R. Kimmey, MFH president and chief executive officer.

This injection of funds could not come at a better time. As budget cuts threaten to eliminate public programs aimed at creating healthier communities, the statistics reveal some alarming truths: Lafayette County has a higher mortality rate due to tobacco use than the State’s overall average—a rate that has remained constant for the last 19 years. According the 2008 U.S. Census report, emphysema is responsible for 91% of the deaths related to heart disease. Obesity also plagues the County as a high rate of residents die prematurely from poor diets and sedentary lifestyles—factors that can lead to heart disease.

“This funding comes to us at a critical juncture when we are faced with funding cuts at so many levels,” said Nola Martz, administrator for the Lafayette County Health Department. “With this funding, we will expand existing evidence-based tobacco cessation and prevention programs in schools and worksites in a manner that’s sustainable. We will also access public use areas and worksites in the County for smoke-free policy implementation.”

**SIM projects include:**

- Increasing access to locally grown food for low income residents and food service managers that will impact schools, worksites and restaurants
- Developing plans for increased connectivity of sidewalks, trails and paths
- Developing evaluation criteria to ensure efficacy of tobacco cessation and obesity programs
- Incorporating measures to sustain all programming to create a healthy and active community

“SIM grant funding will allow us to continue several efforts already under way to help create an environment where the healthy choice is the easy choice,” said Lynda Johnson, nutrition and health education specialist at the MU-Extension. “We want to promote opportunities for individuals to be physically active and improve nutrition by having greater access to more fruits and vegetables. We look forward to working in partnership with the HCC, Health Department, and local organizations to promote healthier lifestyles and more vibrant communities.”

**About MFH**

In July 2010, MFH was one of 11 U.S. grantmaking organizations selected to receive Social Innovation Fund (SIF) grants. SIF is an initiative of the Corporation for National and Community Service, which improves the lives of people in low-income U.S. communities. Through an innovative public-private partnership, SIF and local grantmakers co-invest in programs that target community-based solutions to impact youth development, economic opportunity or healthy futures opportunities. Every Federal dollar invested is matched with private funds. To learn more, visit [www.NationalService.gov/Innovation](http://www.NationalService.gov/Innovation).

Established in 2000, MFH is the largest nongovernmental funder of community health activities in Missouri. MFH is in its eighth year of grantmaking, having issued more than \$400 million in grants and awards to date. It is dedicated to improving the health of uninsured and underserved residents in 84 Missouri counties and the City of St. Louis. For more information, visit [www.mffh.org](http://www.mffh.org).

**About the HCC**

The Health Care Coalition of Lafayette County collaborates with area agencies, businesses and other non-profits to advocate for the health and well being of Lafayette County residents. Current efforts include a Rural Missouri Health Co-op—with a workplace wellness component—aimed at creating a healthier workforce and reducing insurance premiums; health information technology initiatives to equip health care providers with the resources needed to offer telemedicine to increase patient access to quality health care; as well as a cadre of outreach programs that address everything from youth health and wellness to elder care services to behavioral health care initiatives.

To learn more, visit [www.hccnetwork.org](http://www.hccnetwork.org), [www.wellnessworks.hccnetwork.org](http://www.wellnessworks.hccnetwork.org) and [www.4everfit.org](http://www.4everfit.org), or contact the HCC directly at 660.259.9019.

###