

Collaboration Will Reduce Childhood Obesity

“Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities” is a national program aimed at reducing the epidemic of childhood obesity. Funding from the **Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF)** will support **FirstHealth of the Carolinas** and its partners to implement a program for the benefit of children in five communities in **Moore** and **Montgomery** Counties.



A study conducted in Montgomery County in 2007 and 2008 showed that more than 25% of children grades K-12 are obese, with another 18% of children being overweight. These troubling statistics made the Moore/Montgomery area ideal for the “Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities” program. Selection of communities focuses on reaching children who are at highest risk for obesity based on income,



ethnicity, and geographic location. Moore and Montgomery Counties are one of fifty communities nationwide that will benefit from this program. The Nash/Edgecombe area in northeastern North Carolina is also participating.

Specifically, the program will focus on five communities within our region – **Candor, Mt. Gilead, Robbins, Aberdeen and Southern Pines**. Efforts will focus on prioritizing the health of each community by increasing the availability of affordable healthy food options and creating opportunities for children to be more active. **Sustainable Sandhills** is one of a number of partners in this effort. Our main goal is to increase opportunities for children to be safe and active outdoors. By analyzing current land use policies and zoning procedures, we hope to inform decisions about sidewalk placement



and crosswalks that would enable children to safely walk or bike to school. Our efforts will also help to increase the number of and access to greenways and local parks.

This project was kicked off with a luncheon at FirstHealth of the Carolinas on January 13th. Speakers included FirstHealth CEO Charles T. Frock and Joanne Lee from the HKHC National Program Office located in Chapel Hill. In the spirit of the program, luncheon attendees were given nutritional information about the food served, and asked to discuss how the information influenced their food choices. Attendees were also asked to evaluate their pedestrian journey on the FirstHealth campus from the parking lot to the luncheon location!



For more information on the **Healthy Kids Healthy Communities** in Moore and Montgomery counties, please contact Melissa Watford and Cindy Laton of FirstHealth Community Health Services (see contact information below) or visit www.healthykidshealthycommunities.org.

Melissa Watford

Project Director: Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities
mwatford@firsthealth.org, (910) 255-3647

Cindy Laton

Program Coordinator: Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities
claton@firsthealth.org, (910) 255-3645