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**N E W S   R E L E A S E**

**Whole Kids Foundation and United Health Foundation**

**Announce Recipients of Healthy Kids Innovation Grants**

*Grants fund solutions to improve children’s health and nutrition*

**AUSTIN, Texas (Sept. 20, 2016) –** Whole Kids Foundation and United Health Foundation are awarding a total of $200,000 to nine schools and nonprofit organizations through the [Healthy Kids Innovation Grant Program](https://www.wholekidsfoundation.org/index.php/health-kids-innovation), which was created to fund the next generation of ideas to improve children’s nutrition.

Recipients were chosen for creating programs aimed at increasing access to healthy, nutritious food and nutrition education in their communities. Each will receive up to $25,000 to put their creative project ideas in motion. Projects range from community gardens and student entrepreneurship initiatives to online video-based training programs.

As part of United Health Foundation’s Better Health in Local Communities initiative, Whole Kids Foundation and United Health Foundation [share a common mission](http://www.unitedhealthgroup.com/newsroom/articles/feed/unitedhealth%20group/2015/1001wholekidsfoundationprogram.aspx) to improve people’s health and quality of life. According to [America’s Health Rankings](http://www.americashealthrankings.org), children are three times more likely to have their health needs unmet if they are living in low-income or impoverished areas - these programs expand access to healthy foods that can improve the health of those who need it most.

“The Healthy Kids Innovation Grant recipients are pioneering what’s next in children’s nutrition,” said Nona Evans, president and executive director of Whole Kids Foundation. “We are grateful for United Health Foundation’s partnership to fund these programs that will collectively serve thousands of students.”

“These grants will help facilitate innovative solutions that we hope will shape future standards for children’s health and nutrition and improving people’s health and well-being,” said Chris Stidman, president of United Health Foundation.

The nine grant recipients are:

**A Garden for Every School, Keep Iowa Beautiful – Des Moines, Iowa**

A $25,000 grant will support “A Garden for Every School," a free, online, video-based training program for school garden planning through Keep Iowa Beautiful, a nonprofit that brings cultural and economic vitality to communities through improvement and enhancement projects. Ten short, easy-to-share videos on Teachers-Going-Green.com provide step-by-step training on how to plan and create a garden, from assembling a team to asset-mapping. A downloadable school garden-planning guide is also available. The videos and planning guides can be revisited and updated annually as an ongoing resource for school gardens.

**Vegetable Desert Farmer's Market, Charles Barrett Elementary – Los Angeles**

With relatively few grocery options in South Los Angeles, access to fresh fruits and vegetables is limited. This $25,000 grant will support a nutrition education and entrepreneurship program at Charles Barrett Elementary School in partnership with Girls Inc., which develops research-based programs that encourage girls to take risks and master challenges. Female students will have the opportunity to manage a garden, learn about the nutritional value of vegetables, and create a sustainable business through class time and an after-school garden club. Students will tend the garden and create a farmers market program. Through mentorship and education, this program addresses the need for fresh vegetables in the community, helps foster student entrepreneurship, and expands healthy eating and financial literacy for girls.

**Kids and Community at the Bethel Farm, Willamette Farm and Food Coalition – Eugene, Ore.**

Willamette Farm and Food Coalition (WFFC) works to increase low-income individuals’ access to locally grown foods. The $25,000 grant will enable WFFC to lead farm-to-school activities for students at the Bethel Production and Education Farm, which is funded and managed by the Bethel School District. This will also help the district’s nutrition services staff in sourcing food from the farm, engage residents of the surrounding low-income community in gardening opportunities, and help establish a low-cost community support agriculture (CSA) program and farm stand.

**Teacher Training in Mindfulness-Based Integrative Nutrition and Body Wellness, Jefferson County Public Schools – Louisville, Ky.**

Research indicates that teachers are more at risk than other adults to neglect self-care. Seeking to disrupt this trend, Jefferson County Public Schools will receive a $25,000 grant to fund professional development opportunities for its teachers to create self-care plans. The two-day educator retreat will include seminars that address topics such as mindfulness, self-care and nutrition. The teachers will then create curriculum to share with students and form a monthly professional learning community to maintain momentum in mindful health and wellness.

**Leadership Legacy Institute 2017, The Oriental Institute – Chicago**

The Oriental Institute will use its $25,000 grant to help fund a program for teachers that use the archaeological exploration of food, health and nutrition in ancient civilizations to help students understand human diets and the importance of food diversity for health. The Oriental Institute is dedicated to providing learning opportunities about the cultures of the ancient Near East to children. This new program will help teachers connect children with the lives of ancient peoples and help them make healthy, educated food decisions. Thirty fifth- through eighth-grade teachers from the Chicago area will train to use this curriculum to teach nutrition and gardening through the lens of ancient archeology.

**Farm at School, Encinitas Union School District – Carlsbad, Calif.**

Connecting a district-wide garden education program to the district lunch program, Encinitas Union School District (EUSD) will use its $25,000 grant to support the “Farm at School” program. By providing allstudents with a full-day field trip to the district’s 10-acre Farm Lab, an organic garden for nutritional education, students will acquire grade-level-appropriate lessons that support a food-literate culture. Experiential learning will incorporate design, research, engineering, art, math and science to support nutrition that connects school garden education to the cafeterias at each school in the district. The Farm at School program will aid students in making the connection between EUSD-grown food and school lunch choices with a student-led branding campaign and videos to promote the Farm Lab food. An app for parents and students will share menus and notifications about EUSD-grown produce.

**Slow Food USA – Denver**

School garden programs continue to proliferate across the country, providing students with hands-on experience in growing, harvesting, cooking and eating healthy fresh produce; however, due to food safety concerns, lack of kitchen facilities or staff training, few school districts allow school garden produce to be served in cafeterias. This $25,000 grant will support the development of a Garden-to-Cafeteria Toolkit for Slow Food USA’s chapter sites across the U.S. to support the protocol development and training necessary to have a successful program. The second phase of the project will involve in-person workshops at five school districts, and remote support for five to ten school districts to overcome any hurdles to successful implementation. This program is a tremendous opportunity for students to see the connection between fresh produce grown in the school garden and healthy food that is served in the cafeteria.

**Green Garden Bakery, Urban Strategies, Inc. – Minneapolis**

Urban Strategies is a not-for-profit organization working to build safe and thriving communities in urban core neighborhoods. This $20,000 grant will support the expansion of the organization’s Green Garden Bakery program, a youth-run environmental veggie dessert business that engages underserved kids in a weekly after-school program. Students learn about gardening, cooking and nutrition, and will grow, harvest and develop recipes for their produce while simultaneously developing the brand and business. The program’s expansion will incorporate more youth and reach more people throughout Minneapolis.

**School Garden Data Collection App, Captain Planet Foundation – Atlanta**

Captain Planet Foundation is an environmental education nonprofit that operates Project Learning Garden to share a comprehensive school garden program with educators that includes the tools necessary to integrate gardens in school culture. With the ultimate goal of helping children develop an early palate for fresh fruits and vegetables, an $8,000 grant will fund the development of an app to collect school garden data, including pounds harvested, tasting events, lessons given, photos, quotes and workdays, along with a web-based interface to enable streamlined reporting by multiple groups.

**About Whole Kids Foundation**

Whole Kids Foundation, a Whole Foods Market foundation, is based in Austin, Texas, and operates as an independent, nonprofit organization. By empowering schools and inspiring families, the foundation aims to help children reach optimal health through the strength of a healthy body fueled by nutritious food. For more information, visit [www.wholekidsfoundation.org](http://www.wholekidsfoundation.org). For ongoing news and updates, follow Whole Kids Foundation on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/wholekidsfoundation) or Twitter at [@WholeKidsFnd](https://twitter.com/%40wholekidsfnd).

**About United Health Foundation**

Through collaboration with community partners, grants and outreach efforts, United Health Foundation works to improve our health system, build a diverse and dynamic health workforce and enhance the well-being of local communities. United Health Foundation was established by UnitedHealth Group (NYSE: UNH) in 1999 as a not-for-profit, private foundation dedicated to improving health and health care. To date, United Health Foundation has committed nearly $315 million to programs and communities around the world. We invite you to learn more at [www.unitedhealthgroup.com/SocialResponsibility](http://www.unitedhealthgroup.com/SocialResponsibility) or follow [Facebook.com/UHGGives](https://www.facebook.com/uhggives).

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