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UCare announces UCare Fund grants for 2011

Funds support organizations and innovative programs working to reduce obesity and promote healthy lifestyles in Minnesota

MINNEAPOLIS, Nov. 9, 2011 – [UCare](#) announced today that its [UCare Fund](#) has distributed 22 grants totaling \$885,940 to Minnesota organizations working to reduce obesity and promote healthy lifestyles among people of all ages, cultures, and abilities.

The UCare Fund is a community-directed initiative of UCare, the fourth-largest health plan in Minnesota. Established in 1998, the Fund provides grants and staff support to projects that advance [UCare's mission](#) to improve the health of UCare members through innovative services and partnerships across communities, and reduce health disparities for disadvantaged populations in the Twin Cities and throughout Greater Minnesota.

“The need for health care funding in the community remains great due to ongoing and challenging economic conditions for many counties, agencies, and providers,” said Ghita Worcester, Senior Vice President of Public Affairs and Marketing, UCare. “Our UCare Fund grants in 2011 will facilitate the efforts of these organizations on a statewide basis to reduce obesity and promote healthy outcomes among thousands of underserved Minnesotans.”

Following is the list of 19 community grants and three research grants:

- [Helping Hands Outreach](#) - Develop, implement and review outcomes for health activities for older adults and adults with disabilities.
- [Fillmore County](#) Public Health, Obesity Reduction and Preventive Health Care - Reduce the incidence of obesity-related diseases by targeting the associated risk factors of nutrition and physical activity; improve access to preventive health care; offer screenings; and enact policy, system, and environmental changes to improve outcomes.
- [The Indian Health Board of Minneapolis, Inc., Running Wolf Fitness Center](#) - Renovate the new location of running Wolf Fitness Center to create a state-of-the-art fitness center.

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- [Becker, Clay, Otter Tail, and Wilkin counties' Partner SHIP 4 Health Project](#) - Partner with schools to enhance and strengthen school wellness policies, and provide technical assistance to help incorporate changes that will provide healthy eating and physical activity for their students.
- [Mankato Family YMCA](#) - Implement research-based curriculum that integrates healthy snacks, active games, and creative learning opportunities for youth along with a parent component to promote healthy eating and physical activity to prevent childhood obesity. Also use this information in the Y's After School Program, family special events, and to develop a new summer Family Challenge program.
- [YWCA of Minneapolis](#) – Expand the Strong Fast Fit Youth program which provides 120 - 170 Native American and Latino youth and their families with culturally specific fitness and health education programming about obesity and diabetes prevention strategies, lifelong health fitness and nutrition habits; and wellness practices that respect culture, language, food preferences, and healing traditions, all in the context of their home communities.
- [Playworks Twin Cities](#) - Expand Playworks from four to nine low-income elementary schools in Minneapolis; place full-time, well-trained, staff in schools to run physical activity and play programs for children during recess and throughout the school day; improve children's physical, social, and emotional health; and make the learning environment more inclusive and conducive to learning.
- [Opportunity Partners](#) - Develop a curriculum and purchase technology for Healthy Opportunities, a program designed to teach individuals with disabilities about nutrition, shopping, cooking, exercise, and making healthy choices to achieve optimum health.
- [Payne-Phalen Living At Home/Block Nurse Program](#) - Maintain the position of the program's half-time Medical Advocate, and promote elders' health, stability, and their ability to continue to live safely in their homes.
- [Ramsey County Community Human Services](#) - Target wellness interventions to improve frequency and specificity of physical health interventions with Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) teams to help clients achieve reductions in obesity as measured by Body Mass Index (BMI), and to improve monitoring of wellness activities and interventions with clients.
- [Center for Policy, Planning, and Performance](#)/African Community Health Services (ACHS) Breast Health Program - Provide breast health awareness and education to the Somali and Oromo communities in Minneapolis, Bloomington, and Eden Prairie, and offer training, outreach, case management, appointment, transportation, and follow-up services.

- [Special Olympics Minnesota](#) – Support continuation of, and increased participation in, the Healthy Athletes[®] initiative, which offers a wide variety of free medical and educational health screenings throughout the state and year.
- [Fairview Foundation](#) - Create a health commons center within Riverside Plaza as a health resource for Cedar-Riverside neighborhood residents, and a learning resource for students of Transcultural Nursing at Augsburg College.
- [Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio](#) - Enhance Community Health Worker Services to alter social norms of sedentary lifestyles and overindulgence in unhealthy foods, and increase knowledge of, and access to, preventive health care and health care resources.
- [City of Bloomington, Division of Public Health](#) - Expand the availability of evidence-based and research-supported interventions to address issues of obesity reduction and preventive health care; integrate evidence-based practices related to obesity reduction and preventive health care into public health nursing strategies; and increase the ability to track client outcomes and program effectiveness.
- [Blue Earth County Public Health](#) - Outreach to about 350 UCare members enrolled in community and waiver UCare's Minnesota Senior Health Options (MSHO) and Minnesota Senior Care Plus (MSC Plus) programs in Blue Earth County and North Mankato to help enroll members in tai chi classes, yoga, water exercise, Pilates, bicycling, and health and wellness classes. Also complete pre- and post- assessments to measure health outcomes and/or improvements.
- [University of Minnesota College in the Schools](#) - Support students and teachers affiliated with the school's human anatomy and physiology course; help teachers gain expertise in diseases of the digestive system, obesity, and diabetes through intensive professional development and provide high-quality instruction in their classrooms; and help high school students develop multi-media community outreach efforts targeting elementary students and their families to promote disease prevention and healthy lifestyle habits.
- [Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services \(SMRLS\)](#) – Grant funds the Senior Law Project, which provides legal advice and representation to senior citizens seeking safe and affordable housing, consumer protection, freedom from abuse, and income maintenance; and the Community Legal Education Project, which sources volunteer attorneys to provide free, community legal education and advice to seniors by telephone and in face-to-face meetings.
- [Wilderness Inquiry](#) – Provides a variety of programs and services designed to promote involvement in outdoor pursuits for youth, families, persons with developmental disabilities and others. Programs include: Outdoor leadership training for urban youth ages 13 to 18 and Gateway to Adventure an innovative program designed to provide people with cognitive disabilities the opportunity to learn and practice the kinds of skills and behaviors typically needed to have a safe, enjoyable outdoor adventure experience.

Research grants:

- [U of M, Department of Family Medicine and Community Health](#)'s **East Metro American Indian Diabetes Initiative (EMAIDI): A Qualitative Analysis of Project Contributions to Improvements in Health** – This partnership between the Dept. of Family Medicine and Community Health and several community agencies serving low-income, urban-dwelling American Indians will work to bridge community-based projects oriented to health through diabetes- and obesity-prevention work and disease management. Projects include Youth Education and Healthy Living Workshops for youth and teens, the Family Education Diabetes Series (FEDS) for adults and families, and Elder Education for American Indian elders.
- [West Side Community Health Services, Inc.](#), **Somali, Latino, and Hmong Partnership for Health and Wellness (SoLaHmo)** - Support a study targeting lifestyle behaviors, including dietary intake and physical activity of Hmong, Latino, and Somali families, with children 3-12 years old in St. Paul. This assessment will use a community-based participatory action approach and qualitative research methods to examine beliefs, behaviors, and perceived barriers to healthy eating and physical activity, as well as the communities' needs and desire to prevent obesity.
- [U of M Department of Family Medicine and Community Health](#), and [City of Burnsville Parks and Recreation](#) project **“Standing Together for Healthy Kids”** - Use community-based, participatory research methods to partner with community members, community organization leaders, and academic researchers to create and test a childhood obesity intervention tailored to a specific community, which will help increase the likelihood of success.

UCare Fund grant applicants must be Minnesota-based organizations; private nonprofit or public tax-exempt 501(c) (3) organizations; city, county, and other governmental agencies eligible to receive funding; tribal governments and agencies; and research and faith-based organizations addressing the needs of underserved populations. Grants are determined by members of the UCare Fund Council, which includes representatives of the UCare's Board of Directors, and a Consumer Board Representative. The current funding cycle dates are Sept. 1, 2011 - Aug. 31, 2012.

About UCare

UCare (www.ucare.org) is an independent, nonprofit health plan providing health care and administrative services to more than 230,000 members. UCare partners with health care providers, counties, and community organizations to create and deliver innovative health coverage products for:

- Individuals and families enrolled in income-based Minnesota Health Care Programs, such as MinnesotaCare and Prepaid Medical Assistance Program.
- Adults with disabilities and Medicare beneficiaries with chronic health conditions.
- Minnesotans dually eligible for Medical Assistance and Medicare.
- Medicare-eligible individuals throughout Minnesota and in western Wisconsin.

UCare addresses health care disparities and care access issues through its UCare Fund grants and a broad array of community initiatives. The health plan received Top 100 Workplaces honors in 2010 and 2011 from the *Star Tribune*.

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