

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: OCTOBER 5, 2010

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: APPLICATION FOR KAISER PERMANENTE HEALTHY EATING ACTIVE LIVING INITIATIVE FUNDS FOR A CHILDHOOD OBESITY PROJECT

ISSUE: Consideration of a application for Kaiser Permanente's Healthy Eating Active Living Initiative funds for a childhood obesity project.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

- (1) Approve the submission of the grant application; and
- (2) Authorize the City Manager to execute the necessary documents that may be required.

DISCUSSION: Kaiser Permanente invited the *Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria* and the Alexandria Health Department to submit a grant to their final Healthy Eating Active Living grant program for 2010, as a result of the ACHIEVE Planning Team's efforts to reduce early childhood obesity over the last year and a half. The invitation was emailed on Tuesday, September 28 at 5 p.m. and the proposal is due on Friday, October 8.

The *Partnership's* ACHIEVE Planning Team is a community coalition whose partners include Alexandria/Arlington Smart Beginnings, health professionals, City agencies, childcare providers, community and faith organizations, businesses, and engaged residents. For the last year and a half, the ACHIEVE Team has worked to build awareness among a broad base of partners and community leaders on the obesity rates in Alexandria. Over 40% of Alexandria children, ages 2-5, are overweight or obese.

The ACHIEVE Team created the Preschool Health Network, which now leads health initiatives within the preschool community and is piloting an evidence-based nutrition program called Color Me Healthy in 14 preschools (including 22 centers, 45 classrooms, and reaching over 1,000 students). The team also worked to increase access to healthy foods by partnering with the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority to pilot an adult and children's gardening project, and is exploring additional opportunities to promote breastfeeding community-wide, to increase access to play spaces, and to partner with the Four Mile Run Farmers Market to accept SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program). One of ACHIEVE's initiatives, "Play Spaces for Tots" was included in Goal 2 of the Alexandria Strategic Plan.

The ACHIEVE Planning Team has been working to build a broad holistic approach to prevent childhood obesity. With the “Play Spaces for Tots” initiative included in Strategic Planning Goal 2, it is important to better understand resident barriers to recreation access in order to identify and target funding needs.

Last year, ACHIEVE conducted a series of focus groups with 65 parent play groups and family child care providers and facilitated surveys of 57 Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program participants. Participants highlighted the lack of safe outdoor and indoor recreation spaces as major barriers for encouraging children’s activity. An initial assessment done in the Arlandria area by ACHIEVE partners found that the majority of play spaces did not provide for the needs of children, ages 2-5.

ACHIEVE also plans to increase the sustainability of its gardening initiative within public housing by organizing community partnerships and programs more formally, and building resident leadership.

FISCAL IMPACT: The *Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria* and the Alexandria Health Department will be requesting up to \$90,000 from Kaiser Permanente to fund: 1) a play space consultant to complete a full assessment of the public/private, indoor/outdoor play spaces in Alexandria, including focus groups with residents and a Photovoice project to better understand resident-perceived barriers to accessing play spaces; 2) initial small-scale improvements identified through the assessment process; and 3) a consultant for the ARHA gardening project to assist in developing consistent messages and curricula across the cooking, nutrition, and gardening programming currently underway at the Ruby Tucker Family Center.

There will be no fiscal impact to the City of Alexandria.

STAFF:

Stephen Haering, Health Director, Alexandria Health Department
Carrie Fesperman Redden, Alexandria Health Department