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HealthVisions Midwest Receives CDC Funding to Eliminate Health Disparities

East Chicago Organization Is One of 40 Organizations Selected From 22 States

HealthVisions Midwest, a nonprofit organization sponsored by the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ, based in East Chicago, was recently awarded \$415,000 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to eliminate racial and ethnic health disparities among minority populations. HealthVisions Midwest is one of 40 organizations selected from 22 states across the country.

The five-year funding will support local efforts to address and overcome the unique causes of health disparities among specific ethnic populations and in key health areas. Locally, the CDC funding will benefit residents throughout Lake County and will be used to address infant mortality and morbidity among the Hispanic/Latino populations.

“The CDC Reach Us Grant will help bring positive changes for Hispanics and Latinos of Lake County in terms of access to healthcare and reducing health disparities, particularly in terms of reducing infant mortalities. The grant program will help identify key barriers that prohibit access to healthcare and find ways to overcome these barriers. The information and data this project will provide will be instrumental in making local, systemic changes that will benefit local communities.” said Donald Barnes, CEO/President.

The CDC Reach Us Grant will be an extension of similar HealthVisions services currently offered in East Chicago and Gary. The program centers on the use of Community Health Workers (CHW) who work directly in the community to identify persons in need of healthcare services and information. The CHW program, proven successful in other regions of the country, reaches out to underserved populations and is encouraged by the CDC. The programs in Gary and East Chicago have successfully used this model to reduce infant mortality and morbidity at each location and are excited to expand the program throughout Lake County.

The award, which is funded through CDC’s Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) U.S. program, will target five racial and ethnic groups: African Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, Asian Americans, Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders, and American Indians/Alaska Natives. REACH U.S. activities focus on a range of key health areas that contribute to health disparities, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, breast and cervical cancer, hepatitis B, asthma, infant mortality, and adult immunizations.

“Despite improvements in the overall health of the nation, health disparities remain one of the most important public health challenges of our time,” said Janet Collins, Ph.D., director, CDC’s National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion.

“We are extremely excited about the new REACH award recipients because they offer a plethora of knowledge in addressing health disparities and their innovative approaches will help improve people’s health in our communities, health care settings, schools, and work sites.”

Through the REACH U.S. initiative, 18 national and regional Centers of Excellence in the Elimination of Disparities (CEEDs) and 22 Action Communities will be established throughout the country. The CEEDs will serve as national resource centers with expertise in specific ethnic populations and will train additional communities to further spread the impact of REACH activities. The Action Communities will implement and evaluate successful approaches within a specific community to impact population groups, rather than individuals, and focus on key health conditions that contribute to health disparities.

Since 1999, the REACH program has demonstrated that fully engaging communities in health strategies that address the unique social, economic, and cultural circumstances of racial and ethnic minority groups can reduce health disparities. For more information about the REACH program, visit CDC’s Web site at www.cdc.gov/reach.

To learn more about HealthVisions Midwest, please visit www.hvusa.org or call Maria Burk, Director of Grants, at 397-4335 ext.22.

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Note to editors: Wayne H. Giles, MD, MS, director, CDC’s Division of Adult and Community Health, is available to discuss the REACH U.S. cooperative agreement program. Please contact the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion’s Office of Communication at 770-488-5131 to arrange an interview.