

HEALTH & WELL-BEING @issue

A PUBLICATION OF THE RAPIDES FOUNDATION FALL 2021

 THE RAPIDES FOUNDATION

Making Healthy Living Easier

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HEALTHY BEHAVIORS PROGRAM GRANTS MAKE HEALTHY LIVING EASIER WHERE RESIDENTS LIVE, WORK AND PLAY

Communities throughout Central Louisiana are implementing evidence-based, community-driven solutions that are attempting to make it easier for their residents to stay healthy. They're using funds from The Rapides Foundation's Healthy Behaviors Program Grant for projects designed to prevent and reduce obesity rates and prevent and control tobacco use.

Grant projects are located throughout the Foundation's nine-parish service area and include farmers markets, community gardens, walking trails and healthy food preparation demonstrations and tastings, to name a few. The projects are designed to change people's behaviors so that they lead healthier lifestyles and adopt healthy habits that

carry over to the next generations.

Healthy Behaviors Program Grants are three-year grants of up to \$225,000. Some communities are using the funds to make improvements on previous Healthy Behaviors Program Grants from the Foundation.

Today, there are 10 active, multi-year Healthy Behaviors Program Grants totaling \$1.4 million. The grant proposal submission process is currently closed.

"The goal is to support nonprofit organizations and government entities to develop, implement, and enhance comprehensive community-based wellness and prevention projects focusing on evidence-based nutrition and physical activity and tobacco prevention and control strategies," said Joe Rosier, President and CEO of The Rapides Foundation.

On the cover: Garden and Nutrition Coordinator Bridget Gustafson (left) and Executive Director JoAnna Cooper at the Ben D. Johnson Educational Center's Legacy Corner Store, which is stocked with healthy foods. The center is one of 10 active Healthy Behaviors Program grantees.



Volunteers and staff work in the community garden at the Ben D. Johnson Educational Center.

“Ensuring opportunities for residents to make healthy choices is a key component of our Healthy Behaviors Initiative. The Foundation welcomes and encourages partners and organizations to come together to influence health.”

The idea is to make healthy behaviors the norm, not the exception.

Ben D. Johnson Educational Center Healthy Food Project

The Ben D. Johnson Educational Center in Natchitoches uses its \$225,000 three-year grant to improve healthy eating opportunities for residents in the low-income community of West Natchitoches. Grant-funded projects located at the center include a community garden, development of a retail space to sell healthy food at an affordable price, implementation of a community advisory council, a summer feeding program and free classes to teach residents gardening, nutrition and healthy eating skills.

West Natchitoches is historically a “food desert,” where residents live more than a mile from the nearest

“The grant funding is making a difference in this community to help people eat healthier, and we are grateful for it.”

JoAnna Cooper, Ben D. Johnson Educational Center
Executive Director

grocery store and many of the residents lack transportation, Executive Director JoAnna Cooper said. The goal is to bring healthy food to the neighborhood, increasing access and availability.

With the Foundation’s grant funding, the BDJ Center’s goal to increase access to healthy foods included expanding the existing Legacy Café to include a retail grocery space called the Legacy Corner Store. This corner store is stocked with healthy foods like fresh and frozen products, beverages and staple food items. The Legacy Corner Store also accepts SNAP EBT cards and has received additional funds from donors to subsidize special “buy one, get one free” deals on healthy items such as low-fat milk, produce and healthy snacks.

As part of its grant activities, the center offers cooking demonstrations and tastings, oftentimes featuring produce grown in the Legacy Garden. These demonstrations show residents new and healthy ways to prepare food and in many cases, expose residents to vegetables or fruits they’ve never eaten.

“We had a canning event where we were teaching people how to pickle okra and peppers. We took them step by step, showed them how to do it and then gave them jars of okra and peppers to take home and do it themselves,” Cooper said. On another occasion, residents were taught healthy ways to prepare sweet potatoes, including baked instead of fried sweet potato fries. A young mother in the audience was shown how she could save money by making baby food with sweet potatoes.

The BDJ Center has used equipment and supplies purchased through the grant to expand their capacity to offer programs funded by government and other grants such as a summer feeding program for youth. The 2021 summer program served 2,481 free meals to young people in the area over a six-week period, making meals meeting USDA guidelines that are freshly prepared, sometimes using food grown in the Legacy Garden.

“I was just thinking about what this grant has meant to this community, and the gratitude I feel personally is a bit overwhelming. The grant funding is making a difference in this community to help people eat healthier, and we are grateful for it.”



Winnfield residents enjoy the park improvements designed to increase physical activity.

City of Winnfield PARC Project

The City of Winnfield uses its \$150,000 three-year grant for the Providing Active Recreation to Community (PARC) Project, which is designed to decrease the obesity rate and increase healthy lifestyles for residents of Winnfield.

PARC Project grant funds are being used to enhance and improve amenities at Grove Street and Henderson Holden parks, providing residents with a vast variety of opportunities for physical activity. This includes paving and resurfacing walking tracks, adding fitness equipment, implementing community exercise programming and providing nutrition education for residents.

"The goal is to give residents the opportunities needed to improve their quality of life through family-centered resources in safe and positive environments," said Shannan L. Chevallier, LSU AgCenter Assistant Extension Nutrition Agent and Chairman of the City of Winnfield Parks and Recreation Board. "Research has shown that physical activity increases an individual's overall energy expenditure.

City of Winnfield PARC Project



“The goal is to give residents the opportunities needed to improve their quality of life through family-centered resources in safe and positive environments.”

Shannan L. Chevallier, City of Winnfield Parks and Recreation Board Chairman

It is important to create a regimen consisting of a variety of exercises, from muscle strengthening, to brisk walks.”

The primary goal of the PARC Project is to create healthier communities by making healthier living easier where people work, live, learn, and play. Implementing walking tracks with adult fitness equipment will improve the overall health of Winn Parish citizens by improving weight, nutrition, physical activity, tobacco use, and emotional well-being accompanied by overall improved mental health.

The City of Winnfield plans to offer group fitness opportunities, including walking groups where residents meet weekly and hold each other accountable. “Citizens benefit from this concept as it is free, emphasizes health and wellness while producing accountability, as well as increases relationships, creating new friendships,” Chevallier said.

“Without The Rapides Foundation funding, these projects would not have been possible,” she said. “It costs a lot to do recreation projects. I can’t thank them enough for all their support, not just in the funding, but the support they



Without The Rapides Foundation, there is no way we would be able to reach the amount of girls we reach each season. We wouldn't have the funding.

Marle Chapman, YWCA Program Director



Nachman Elementary School is one of many schools in the region hosting Girls on the Run groups.



give monthly from the phone calls. I can send an email or pick up the phone, and they are there to give the support that we need."

YWCA Girls on the Run Scholarship Expansion

The Young Women's Christian Association is using its \$148,530 three-year grant to expand opportunities for young girls to participate in the Girls on the Run program. Girls on the Run is a physical activity-based positive youth development program that promotes empowerment by teaching life skills through lessons and running. The program is offered to girls in grades 3 through 8. Girls meet twice a week after school for 10 weeks, where they study the curriculum and train for an end-of-semester 5K race.

Unfortunately, many families cannot afford the full \$150

registration fee, which covers the cost of the curriculum, supplies, 5K race shirts, snacks and medals for one school semester. The cost is doubled if the girl wants to participate in both the Fall and Spring semesters.

Foundation grant money is used for scholarships that help offset the cost in high-needs schools, and as a result, Girls on the Run has seen an increase in participation, said Marle Chapman, YWCA Program Director.

Before the grant, Girls on the Run had about 88 participants per season. Since the grant, that number jumped to 225 per season.

"Without The Rapides Foundation, there is no way we would be able to reach the amount of girls we reach each season. We wouldn't have the funding," Chapman said.



HEALTHY BEHAVIORS PROGRAM GRANTS

- American Heart Association – Fighting the Youth Vaping Epidemic in Central Louisiana
- Ben D. Johnson Educational Center – Healthy Food Project
- Catahoula Parish School Board – Tread the Trail
- Town of Cheneyville – Town of Cheneyville Walking Trail
- Food Bank of Central Louisiana – Expansion of Distribution of Fresh Produce
- Louisiana College – Step It Up Pineville! and the Parrish Fuller Fitness Trail
- Town of Bunkie – Move Bunkie Forward
- City of Natchitoches – Ready, Set, Go! Natchitoches
- City of Winnfield – Providing Active Recreation to Community (PARC) Project
- Young Women's Christian Association – Girls on the Run Scholarship Expansion

A photograph of a man and a woman standing in front of a modern, multi-story building with large windows and a mix of brick and wood siding. The man is on the left, wearing a blue blazer over a light blue shirt. The woman is on the right, wearing a dark blazer over a blue top. They are both smiling. In the background, there is a street with parked cars and a clear blue sky.

BEYOND GRADUATION

Project to address disconnected youth in Central Louisiana

Career Compass of Louisiana and The Rapides Foundation will partner on work

Dr. Chris Maggio, Project Manager for the Beyond Graduation project, is with Crystal Burch, Director of Development & Strategic Partnerships for Career Compass of Louisiana.

The Rapides Foundation has awarded a \$1.4 million grant to Career Compass of Louisiana that addresses the high number of young adults between the ages of 16 and 24 who are neither working nor pursuing an education. Often referred to as “disconnected youth,” a recent study by the Foundation found that nearly 7,500 young adults in Central Louisiana meet those criteria.

“The formative years between ages 16 and 24 are a critical time for young people to develop skills, earn credentials and have experiences that will impact their future,” said Joe Rosier, President and CEO of The Rapides Foundation. “Recent research has shown that young adults who experience disconnection have significantly lower incomes, are less likely to be employed, and have poorer health outcomes than their peers.”

Beyond Graduation is a project designed to address the gap between high school seniors that graduate and apply to postsecondary institutions and those that enroll in their first fall semester.

The project will fund trained career coaches to assist high school students with successfully transitioning to a local two- or four-year university or technical community college. It will also fund staff at participating postsecondary institutions to provide ongoing services to Beyond Graduation students during their college tenure to ensure they continue to progress toward completion.

The Beyond Graduation grant is funded as part of the Foundation’s Workforce Skills and Talent Development component of its Economic Development Initiative. The multi-year grant will be piloted for two years in LaSalle, Natchitoches and Rapides parishes and will initially focus on high school seniors who are at risk of disconnection after they graduate. The pilot will provide an opportunity to learn more about the effectiveness of the strategies and provide input to the project’s future plans to expand to all nine school districts in the Foundation’s service area.

The public school districts, Central Louisiana Technical Community College, Northwestern State University and LSU

“With the new Beyond Graduation project, we and our partners are taking our collective support to the next level for the students who need it most.

Dr. Chris Maggio, Beyond Graduation Project Manager

Leading the Beyond Graduation project team are, from left, The Rapides Foundation's Director of Programs Ashley Stewart and Program Officer Matthew LaBorde; Career Compass Director of Development and Strategic Partnerships Crystal Burch; and Dr. Chris Maggio, Beyond Graduation Project Manager.

of Alexandria are partners on the Beyond Graduation project.

In 2019, the Foundation partnered with Measure of America to determine the level of disconnection in Central Louisiana. Its study found that 21.4% of Central Louisiana individuals between the ages of 16 and 24 were not in school and not employed. The national rate is 11.5%.

“One problem we found is that a high number of Central Louisiana high school seniors apply to a university or community college, but a large percentage of that number don't actually enroll in college for the fall semester after they graduate from high school. We are trying to close that gap of students who applied to, but never enrolled, in postsecondary education,” Rosier said.

The Foundation then partnered with Jobs for the Future (JFF), a national leader in disconnected youth, to provide insight into potential strategies and interventions for young adults in the Central Louisiana region. This work included interviews with local employers, superintendents, postsecondary institutions, youth service providers and disconnected youth.

JFF recommended two types of strategies to prevent disconnection: retention and reconnection. Retention strategies and interventions are designed to ensure students stay within the education pipeline. Reconnection strategies attempt to reconnect young adults who have dropped out of the education system to meaningful education and employment opportunities.

The Beyond Graduation project is a retention strategy that will focus on helping high school seniors successfully transition to a two- or four-year university or community college. Though the project is focusing on three districts, future plans are to expand to all nine school districts in the Foundation's service area depending on the success of the pilot.

Career Compass of Louisiana, a nonprofit education organization, has a longstanding working relationship with The Rapides Foundation and its education arm, The Orchard Foundation. As part of a 2012 grant under the Foundation's Career and Postsecondary Readiness Initiative, Career Compass has been providing postsecondary coaching services to middle school and high school students throughout Central Louisiana.

The Beyond Graduation project will extend those services even further by providing coaching services to support students at key benchmarks during their high school and college years. This will include one-on-one college and career coaching during high school, early outreach and support by college-level coaches, and assistance with transitioning to college, summer workshops and orientations before college starts. Coaches will continue supporting the student throughout their college career.

For the pilot program, the first cohort of high school seniors identified for the program began working with their coaches in Fall 2021.

“Since 2006, Career Compass of Louisiana has helped nearly 129,000 high school seniors from Louisiana communities as they take the next step to pursue education and training after high school,” said Dr. Chris Maggio, Beyond Graduation Project Manager. “With the new Beyond Graduation project, we and our partners are taking our collective support to the next level for the students who need it most. Through this grant from The Rapides Foundation, Central Louisiana high school students who experience barriers to postsecondary education will now have additional layers of support in high school and college. We are deeply grateful for The Rapides Foundation's continued support of our goal to help all students gain access to education and training beyond graduation.”



CLIP Residents Earn Stipend, Free

Nine individuals begin teaching careers after paid re

The Central Louisiana Instructional Partnership recognized its second group of teacher residency graduates in an August 2021 pinning ceremony. Now that they have completed their 15-month residencies, the nine individuals began their careers this fall as middle school math and science teachers.

CLIP is a paid teacher residency program with the goal of improving student achievement in rural school districts by preparing educators to teach in critical shortage areas – middle school math and science.

Residents take part in a 15-month accelerated graduate program of study that culminates in a Master of Arts in Teaching degree from Northwestern State University and a

professional teaching certification. CLIP residents receive a stipend to cover the expense of tuition, as well as an annual stipend of \$36,000 during their residency. While completing their graduate coursework, CLIP residents work alongside a trained and experienced mentor teacher throughout the academic year in a high-needs school identified by the nine partner public school districts.

When they complete the program, graduates are placed in a school where they receive two years of support with an induction coach. CLIP graduates agree to teach in Central Louisiana schools for at least three years following graduation.

CLIP is funded by a \$4.5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Teacher Quality Partnership



2021 CLIP graduates and their fall teaching assignments are:

Seated, left to right:

- **Hannah Roberts**, Winn Parish, Winnfield Middle School, Math
- **Samuel Wright**, Natchitoches Parish, Fairview Alpha, Math
- **Hannah Tarpley**, Allen Parish, Oakdale Middle School, Math
- **Anna Estis**, LaSalle Parish, LaSalle Junior High, Science

Standing, left to right:

- **Christian Broussard**, Natchitoches Parish, Marthaville, Math
- **Taylor Pullig**, Natchitoches Parish, Lakeview Junior High, Science
- **Walker Dillon**, Vernon Parish, Vernon Middle School, Math
- **Charli Hauk**, Avoyelles Parish, Bunkie Elementary, Math
- **Sharia Ashley**, Vernon Parish, Leesville Junior High, Math

Tuition residency program

Program, plus \$8 million in-kind matched funding from project partners. The Orchard Foundation, the education arm of The Rapides Foundation, serves as the lead organization for CLIP. Project partners include the nine Central Louisiana public school districts, NSU's Gallaspy College of Education & Human Development and College of Business & Technology-Computer Information Systems, Urban Learning & Leadership Center, EvalWorks, and The Rapides Foundation.

The first cohort of CLIP residents completed the program in 2020. A third group began its work in 2021 and will graduate in 2022. Recruitment is under way for the fourth and final cohort, which will begin in June 2022.



HOW TO APPLY TO CLIP

Applicants must have a bachelor's degree, must not have a teacher certification and must apply and be accepted to NSU graduate school. Visit education.nsula.edu for a complete list of the M.A.T. requirements and how to apply.

To apply for CLIP, applicants need to complete and submit the CLIP application, essay, and release form to Lindlay Howell, CLIP Field Coordinator. These forms and instructions for the 2022 cohort are available for download at theorchardfoundation.org/clip. Deadline to apply is March 31, 2022.

CLIP applicant interviews will be scheduled in May 2022, with the program slated to begin in June 2022.

For more information, contact Howell at lhowell@theorchardfoundation.org or 318-767-3017.

rapidesfoundation.org



YOUTH SUMMIT on Healthy Behaviors

Central Louisiana students from eight parishes attend event virtually

Central Louisiana students and teachers attended The Rapides Foundation's Youth Summit on Healthy Behaviors, an annual event where participants learn how to become advocates for healthy choices and policy change in their schools and communities.

For the first time in its 10-year history, the Summit was held virtually and broken into six different events during the month of October. This allowed students to participate from their home schools while interacting with speakers and other participants via Zoom.

New Orleans native, hip-hop artist and motivational speaker Dee-1 (pictured above) opened each event, setting the tone by delivering an inspirational keynote that used his life experiences to talk about why he chose a path of healthy behaviors.

"I made a decision that I was going to spend my whole life trying to help people and spend my whole life trying to spread more love and positivity in this world that we live in. But I didn't just make that decision real easy. I saw a lot and I've been through a lot, and after being exposed to so much at an early age, it made me make that decision," he said.

Dee-1 described how he saw his best friend change in middle school, starting with smoking weed before classes. By high school, the friend was involved in criminal activity that resulted in his murder. Dee-1 also saw the negative effects of alcohol and cigarettes at a young age.

"I knew that I had a purpose that was greater than 'let's smoke weed before school and get high.' I had goals; I had big dreams." As an adult, he continues that

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BEHAVIORS





Summit is intended to present students with healthy strategies they can implement in their schools and communities.

The speakers touched on the dangers of tobacco, vaping, drug use and other unhealthy activities, but each session had students brainstorm ideas for advocating healthy behaviors in their schools.

Taylor Reine, Youth Prevention Manager for Well-Ahead Louisiana's Tobacco Cessation and Prevention Program, led the Tobacco Prevention session, which provided education and resources on evidence-based strategies to reduce youth use of tobacco products, including vaping. Activities included time for planning Take Down Tobacco Day events that will take place in the spring and reporting out to the group.

The Healthy Eating and Active Living session was headed by Jessica Shirley, a certified personal trainer, health coach, and group fitness instructor through the American Council on Exercise, who shared the benefits of healthy eating and active living. Activities during the session included brainstorming about their Healthy Eating and Active Living event that will take place in the fall and talking about how to advocate for change at school. Shirley also led exercise breaks during the Summit.

Nigel Wrangham, who has been active in the fields of substance abuse treatment, prevention, and youth empowerment for over 20 years, led the session on Substance and Alcohol Abuse Prevention, delivering a message of positivity, engagement and inspiration.

Wrangham also facilitated an action planning session, where students discussed strategies to implement healthy changes in their schools. Activities included brainstorming a health issue at school, identifying its risk factors and coming up with long-, medium- and short-term goals for change.

In previous years, the Youth Summit was held in Alexandria, where hundreds of students and teachers would spend one day attending workshops, taking group energizer breaks and gathering for a healthy lunch and snacks. Because this year's event was held virtually, materials such as T-shirts, water bottles and Summit folders were delivered to schools, and schools had the option of having healthy lunches delivered or prepared by school nutrition staff.

philosophy. "I have never smoked weed in my whole life, and I'm a rapper. People still try to tempt me but because I know what my goals are, I ask myself, is this going to get me closer to my purpose or pull me further away from my purpose?"

Dee-1 chose a path of healthy behaviors that includes avoiding alcohol and cigarettes, eating healthy foods and being active through basketball, tennis, hiking, running and other activities. "We have to make time, at least 30 minutes a day, to be active. I need y'all to stay active."

Almost 600 students and teachers attended the Youth Summit events, participating from their home schools in classrooms, auditoriums or gyms. Fifty-four schools took part in the Summit, which included Dee-1's keynote, three sessions, lunch and screen breaks.

The Youth Summit on Healthy Behaviors is an event for teachers and students participating in The Rapides Foundation's Healthy Behaviors School District Partnership Grant to learn about creating healthy changes at school. Participating parishes were Allen, Avoyelles, Catahoula, Grant, Natchitoches, Rapides, Vernon and Winn.

One of the goals of the Summit is to increase students' knowledge of healthy eating and active living, substance and alcohol abuse prevention, and tobacco prevention and control. In addition, the



Hurricane Disaster Recovery Fund Deadline Extended to 2022

The Rapides Foundation has extended the application deadline for the Long-Term Recovery Group (LTRG) Hurricane Disaster Recovery Fund. Applications will now be accepted until June 30, 2022.

Fund guidelines, application materials and the online application can be found at www.rapidesfoundation.org by clicking on the "Grants" tab. Applications for the Hurricane Disaster Recovery Fund will be accepted using The Rapides Foundation's online application process only.

The Hurricane Disaster Recovery Fund supports the efforts of disaster Long-Term Recovery Groups operating and serving individuals and households within The Rapides Foundation's nine-parish service area affected by Hurricanes Laura and Delta. Funds can only be used to address documented unmet needs caused by the 2020 hurricanes as identified by the LTRG. The fund is not open to individuals.

For questions related to this funding opportunity, please contact Courtney Keys at The Rapides Foundation at 318-443-3394 or 800-994-3394.



THE RAPIDES FOUNDATION

The Rapides Foundation continues
a legacy of community healthcare
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HEALTH & WELL-BEING
@issue
is published by The Rapides Foundation

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ALEXANDRIA, LA
PERMIT NO. 20

