



Huntsville Hospital's Community Health Initiative distributes \$580,000 to deserving nonprofits

Published: Tuesday, June 19, 2012, 3:35 PM



Steve Doyle, The Huntsville Times

By

HUNTSVILLE -- Fifteen local nonprofit agencies dedicated to helping the sick, needy and homeless will share \$580,000 from Huntsville Hospital's Community Health Initiative.



The grant awards were announced this morning at the Huntsville-Madison County Health Department.

The Nova Center for Youth and Family received the largest grant, \$130,000, to expand a program that sends mental health professionals into 11 area schools. Nova is part of the **Mental Health Center of Madison County**.

The agency will use its grant money to hire three more child therapists, putting the program into at least six additional Huntsville public schools.

"The need is great," said Michael Andrews, a child therapist with the program.

Last school year, the Nova program served 319 students at Madison Cross Roads, New Hope, University Place, Madison, West Madison, Rolling Hills, Morris, Columbia, Madison County and Martin Luther King Jr. elementary schools, as well as Bob Jones High.

An estimated 20 percent of kids between 9 and 12 have mental health symptoms in a given year, said Andrews, but many never receive treatment because of transportation issues, conflicts with parents' work schedules and other problems.

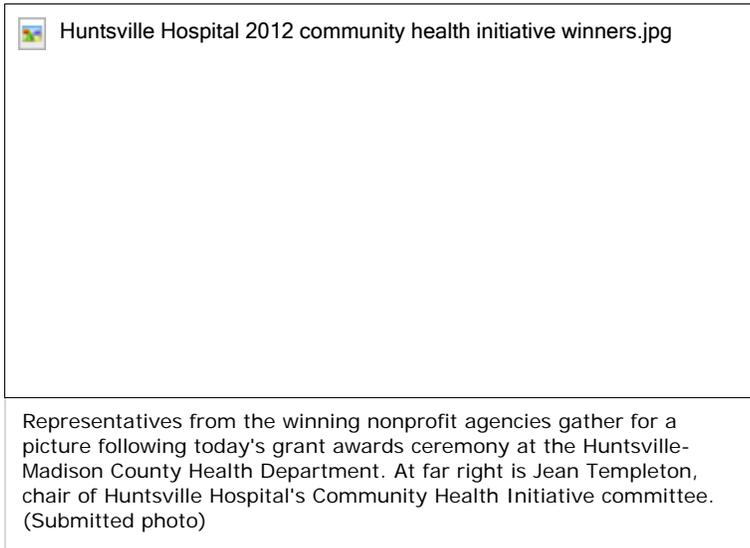
He said the program has been credited with a 70 percent reduction in suspensions at MLK Elementary. One kindergartner who was verbally and physically aggressive when the year began became the school's top test scorer after his mother sought treatment for a substance abuse problem diagnosed by Nova therapists, said Andrews.

Community Health Initiative leaders were so impressed with the results that they more than doubled the Mental Health Center's \$50,000 grant award from 2011.

"They stepped up big-time," said Andrews.

The **AIDS Action Coalition** won a \$7,500 grant for a video-based "telemedicine" project that allows a doctor in Huntsville to talk to and examine AIDS patients in Florence. Director Mary Elizabeth Marr said the project previously received a total of \$50,000 from the Elton John Foundation and Ford Foundation.

"It's really exciting," Marr said.



Other grant winners announced today were:

- American Heart Association, \$7,000 to buy more than 270 "CPR Anytime" kits for families with young children;
- Arc of Madison County, \$30,000 to help cover medical and dental procedures for those with developmental disabilities;
- Autism Resource Foundation, \$20,000 for training materials, special needs equipment and community awareness

education;

- CASA, \$50,000 to continue the SafetyNet program for aging and homebound individuals;
- Community Free Clinic, \$100,000 to continue operating its existing clinics and provide a nurse practitioner for the homeless and evening clinics;
- First Stop, \$10,000 for pharmaceuticals, dental, optical and mental health treatment for the homeless;
- Health Establishments at Local Schools (HEALS), \$100,000 for partial funding of medical staff and medications;
- Huntsville and Tennessee Valley Friends Chapter of AMBUCS, \$5,000 for specially-fitted therapeutic tricycles for children with disabilities;
- New Hope Children's Clinic, \$75,500 for salaries, medical supplies and help with a new dental program.

- Pathfinder, \$15,000 for partial funding of a counselor for women seeking sobriety, plus help with ID cards, medication and transportation to and from work;
- Riley Behavioral & Education Center, \$20,000 to establish a new infant/toddler autism screening and intervention program;
- Salvation Army, \$5,000 for a prescription drug assistance program;
- United Cerebral Palsy, \$5,000 for a counselor to provide short-term individual, family and group mental health counseling.

Now in its 16th year, Huntsville Hospital's Community Health Initiative has distributed a total of about \$7.2 million to support nonprofit health care programs. Often, the grants are seed money to help promising new programs get started.

"If we can get the little seeds planted, then they just grow into wonderful entities," said Jean Templeton, who chairs the Community Health Initiative committee.

Follow me on Twitter: [@swdoyle](https://twitter.com/swdoyle)

© 2012 al.com. All rights reserved.