

# THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL

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## Keeping kids healthy

### First lady applauds group trying to prevent childhood obesity

, Special to My Life

Sunday, July 3, 2011

Shelly Johnstone and Peggy Linton recently represented Healthy Kids Healthy Communities of DeSoto, Tate and Marshall counties, along with Alderman Harvey Payne of Holly Springs, at the annual meeting in Milwaukee.

HKHC is a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi received a four-year grant to work on policy and environmental changes that affect healthy eating and active living in the tri-county region through the Get A Life! initiative to prevent childhood obesity.

"We are in our second year of the grant, and we are extremely excited about the accomplishments that have been made in the area of policy/environmental change, thanks to the work of our local partners," said Linton, community development director for CFNM and program director for HKHC.

"Working with our partner groups in the three counties, we are training elected officials, planning commissioners and other key decision-makers on how to make their communities healthier."

The annual meeting provided the 50 HKHC grantees from across the nation the opportunity to attend educational sessions, tour success projects in and around Milwaukee, and network among grantees. First lady Michelle Obama honored the work of HKHC with a letter that was read at the meeting.

Over the past year, local HKHC efforts include:

Establishing partner groups in DeSoto, Marshall and Tate counties.

Contracting with the Bouchillon Institute of Community Planning to provide training and follow-up to local officials and other key decision-makers as they move toward healthier communities.

A "Your Town Your Health" seminar in December 2010

Assisting Tate and Marshall counties in developing a strategic plan for developing policies and making environmental changes for healthier communities; i.e. Senatobia now requires sidewalks in all new developments.

Working in partnership with the DeSoto County Greenways as plans move forward in developing a system of trails with healthy eating options highlighted.

Working with Holly Springs and the city of Horn Lake as they open new farmers markets and continuing to support the efforts in Hernando and Tate County (Senatobia).

Assisting the Tate County Extension Service as it provides educational opportunities on living with diabetes, physical activity, Community Supported Agriculture, and home gardening.

Serving as the lead agency for Global Youth Service Day leading the restoration and/or development of raised herb and vegetable beds at 11 DeSoto County elementary schools working with the Prime Time after-school program.

Promoting the utilization of the three bike trails in DeSoto County.

Issuing a request for a proposal of \$5,000 to each of three partner groups for projects relating to policy and environmental changes that could help reduce the obesity rates.

Assisting with the farmers market vendors' training and supporting the effort to provide EBT machines to local vendors and/or farmers markets.

Being an active member of the Mississippi Food Policy Council.

For more information on preventing childhood obesity in DeSoto, Tate and Marshall counties, go to [cfnm.org/gal](http://cfnm.org/gal), e-mail [plinton@cfnm.org](mailto:plinton@cfnm.org), or call (662)449-5002.



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