

## Grants awarded to fight obesity

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Ardmore — The Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust has awarded start-up and planning grants to Carter County Turning Point and Fit Communities to help battle obesity.

The grants were awarded under the Communities of Excellence Nutrition and Fitness program. The two community coalitions will each receive \$90,000 during the program's first funding cycle.

Carter County Turning Point includes representatives from the public and private sectors as well as local residents. Fit Communities is a consortium between Tishomingo Development Team and Love County Community Coalition.

Both community coalitions will work with their local county health departments to implement policies and programs that promote healthier diets and increased physical activity in Love, Carter and Johnston counties.

Carter County Health Department Administrative Director Mendy Spohn, who also supervises the health departments in Love and Johnston counties, said the five-year program is designed to create sustainable changes in behavior.

"We have a serious problem with the lack of physical activity," she said.

Two-thirds of all Oklahomans are overweight or obese, and most residents don't eat enough fruits and vegetables. In addition, Oklahoma is ranked as the fifth-least physically active state.

"The Carter County Turning Point coalition is excited to be one of the 15 grants funded in the state for this new program," coalition spokesperson Tobi Ervin said. "We are ready to work together with individuals and community partners to make nutrition and fitness a priority and to make the healthy choice, the easy choice where we live, work and play."

The Communities of Excellence in Nutrition and Fitness program funds community-based coalitions to work with schools, communities, workplaces and businesses to implement effective policies and programs that promote opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity. The grants will begin with a 15-month start-up/planning period.

The coalitions will base their individual plans on scientific research that has proven to increase healthy eating and physical activity. An external evaluation of the program will be provided through the Oklahoma State University Department of Nutritional Sciences.

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