



Community Health Initiative awards \$525K to 14 Huntsville-area nonprofits

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HUNTSVILLE, Alabama -- A total of 14 local nonprofit organizations had reason to celebrate Thursday when Huntsville Hospital's Community Health Initiative awarded them more than half a million dollars.

The \$525,000 awarded Thursday brings the Initiative's grant funding up to \$8.3 million over the past 18 years. A total of 46 local agencies have benefited from that assistance.

"This is the happiest day of the year for our committee," said Jean Templeton, chair of the **Community Health Initiative** committee. The 20-member committee each year reviews the grant applications and chooses the winners.

Beth Martin, who also sits on the committee, said choosing between all of the applicants is a difficult decision.

"What we look for is ways to assist in healthcare outside of the hospital walls," Martin said.

The Community Health Initiative is funded by the Health Care Authority of Huntsville Hospital.

The recipients awarded the largest grants, both at \$100,000, are **HEALS (Health Establishments at Local Schools)** and the Community Free Clinic. HEALS is anticipated to use the money to expand its services to include **Lincoln Academy** and the **Harris Home for Children**.

The complete list of Community Health Initiative grant recipients this year are:

- **AMBUCS, \$4,500:** AMBUCS is a program focused on improving mobility and independence for people with disabilities, including providing AmTryke therapeutic tricycles to children with special needs.
- **ARC of Madison County, \$30,000:** The ARC provides services for people with intellectual disabilities, including medical and dental care.
- **Autism Resource Foundation, \$15,000:** The Autism Resource Foundation provides services to families with

children on the autism spectrum.

- **CASA of Madison County, \$43,000:** CASA provides services for the aging and homebound population, including health and safety screenings in their homes.
- **Community Free Clinic, \$100,000:** The clinic provides free medical care to those without access, through both its acute care clinics and its monthly specialty clinics.
- **Community Free Dental Clinic, \$40,000:** The dental clinic provides acute dental care to low-income adults in Madison County who are without dental insurance.
- **First Stop Inc., \$10,000:** First Stop provides services to the homeless, including dental, optical and mental health care services.
- **HEALS, \$100,000:** HEALS provides school-based medical care for students and their families, including diagnosis and treatment of acute medical problems, dental care and health education classes.
- **Mental Health Center of Madison County, \$70,000:** The center's Nova Center for Youth and Family, which provides school-based mental health care, is expanding to include additional schools.
- **New Hope Children's Clinic, \$90,000:** The clinic provides school-based health care to the underserved children of southeast Madison County.
- **North Alabama Sickle Cell Foundation, \$5,000:** The newly formed agency provides education, support and financial assistance for those with sickle cell conditions.
- **Southeastern Diabetes Education Services, \$2,500:** The group's Sugar Falls Day Camp provides diabetes management education to children ages 5-18, as well as year-round support services.
- **United Cerebral Palsy, \$5,000:** The organization's Equipping Families for Success Program provides specialized mental health care for patients and their families.
- **Village of Promise, \$10,000:** The group's Infant University Program delivers education, training and resources to expectant and new parents.

Ginger Finzel, director of the Community Free Dental Clinic, credited the Community Health Initiative's support with making the dental clinic a success. Since it opened its doors in March 2013, the clinic has seen more than 2,000 patients.

[Related story: Volunteer network opens Community Free Dental Clinic in Huntsville]

The clinic has about 40 dentists who donate their time to see those in need, as well as a staff of registered nurses who check patients' blood pressure, blood sugar and other vital signs prior to dental surgery. The patients come in with everything from impacted teeth to out of control infections that could turn deadly, Finzel said.

"Their stories vary," Finzel said. "But these patients would have died if they had not been treated."

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