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**FOUNDATION AWARDS ITS FIVE BILLIONTH GRANT DOLLAR  
TO MEMPHIS HEALTH CENTER**

*Program to Help Sedentary Older Adults Get Physically Active*

Princeton, N.J. (March 4, 2003) – Signaling its commitment to better public understanding of the link between physical activity and good health, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) today announced that it awarded its five billionth grant dollar to Memphis' Church Health Center, which will use its grant funds to test a model program designed to help people age 50 and older become more physically active.

Established in 1972, RWJF's mission is to improve the health and health care of all Americans. It is the nation's fourth largest foundation with assets totaling about \$8 billion at the end of 2002. The Foundation's four-year, \$929,870 grant to the Church Health Center is one of nine community grants made under RWJF's "Active for Life" initiative.

"We're pleased that our five billionth grant dollar is going to one of our Active for Life grantees," said Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, MD, MBA, president & CEO of RWJF. "We all know that being physically active is the best preventive medicine, yet most Americans – particularly those over age 50 -- are still sedentary. Through the Church Health Center's efforts and those of our other Active for Life grantees, we'll learn how to encourage sedentary older adults to get physically active and stick with it. We hope that our successes can then be replicated in more communities."

Physical inactivity is one of the greatest health risks for mid-life and older adults. It contributes to illnesses and disabilities such as arthritis, cancer, diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicate that nearly 80% of adults age 50 and older are at risk for health problems related to lack of regular and sustained physical activity.

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The nine Active for Life grantees will each recruit 1,000 people age 50 and older to participate in one of two model programs aimed at increasing physical activity in older Americans. With its Active for Life funds, Memphis' Church Health Center will implement Active Choices, a program developed by The Stanford Center for Research in Disease Prevention. Active Choices is designed to help participants incorporate physical activities into their daily lives and, following an initial group orientation program, provide them with individualized support and guidance via telephone.

“Of the 35,000 patients seen at the Church Health Center's Clinic ministry, we estimate that roughly two-thirds are being treated for illnesses that could have been prevented,” said Scott Morris, MD, M.Div., executive director of the Church Health Center. “Active Choices is the perfect complement to our community's goal for a healthier Memphis.”

The Church Health Center will collaborate on the Active Choices program with two community service partners: the Metropolitan Inter-Faith Community and the New Pathways Community Development Corporation. The former operates senior centers and delivers meals to large, congregate meal sites in apartment buildings operated by the Memphis Housing Authority. The latter focuses on community development issues in the poorest inner city area of Memphis. These two organizations will help ensure that the Active Choices program is able to involve a diverse cross-section of Memphis residents.

The Active Choices program initially will be based out of the Church Health Center's Hope & Healing Ministry, which teaches its participants – through health education, exercise and movement, nutrition, and child life programs -- how to make positive health behavior changes that are sustainable in daily life. Hope & Healing currently serves more than 6,000 people, 30% of whom are over 50 years of age. Because the Church Health Center will be conducting a research study – essentially testing the effectiveness of the Active Choices program -- enrollment will be limited to 1,000 participants during the four-year demonstration.

*The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, based in Princeton, N.J., is the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to health and health care. It concentrates its grantmaking in four goal areas: to assure that all Americans have access to quality health care at reasonable cost; to improve the quality of care and support for people with chronic health conditions; to promote healthy communities and lifestyles; and to reduce the personal, social and economic harm caused by substance abuse - tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs. More information on RWJF can be found at [www.rwjf.org](http://www.rwjf.org).*

*The Church Health Center, in Memphis, Tenn., has been providing quality, compassionate, and affordable medical care for minimum wage workers, their families,*

*and the homeless since 1987. In doing so, CHC relies on a broad base of financial support from the faith community, and the volunteer help of doctors, nurses, dentists, and others. More information on the Church Health Center and its Hope and Healing Ministry can be found at [www.churchhealthcenter.org](http://www.churchhealthcenter.org).*

*Based at Texas A&M University's School of Rural Public Health, Active for Life is an \$8.7 million RWJF initiative that supports nine four-year community grants to test the effectiveness of two model programs targeted to help mid-life and older Americans become more physically active. More information on the Active for Life program can be found at [www.activeforlife.info](http://www.activeforlife.info). Active for Life is a trademark of The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.*

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