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Foundation aims for healthy changes

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If walking a half-mile to the grocery store would help prevent a heart attack or substituting a healthy snack for greasy fries would lessen clogged arteries, most people would change their lifestyle and perhaps save their lives.

The Western Kansas Community Foundation, which serves 13 counties, wants to help Kansans get and stay healthy.

The foundation applied for and received a three-year, \$300,000 grant to promote simple lifestyle changes and aid Kansans in a fight against disease.

Michelle Komlofske, executive director of the foundation, said the grant money will be used to fuel the Kansas Health Foundation's campaign, "Change Something."

The statewide campaign

launched Sept. 9.

The Western Kansas Community Foundation will launch a smaller version of the campaign in January.

The counties where the campaign is to be promoted are Finney, Grant, Gray, Greeley, Hamilton, Haskell, Kearny, Lane, Meade, Seward, Stanton, Stevens and Wichita.

According to the Kansas Health Foundation, the campaign serves as a reminder that opportunities exist all around people to be more physically active and incorporate healthier eating habits.

Komlofske said as part of the campaign, she and other local foundation members will go to surrounding communities and find out what works for residents there.

She said she wants everyone to be successful and incorporate community plans and projects

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that may help people achieve their goals for a healthier lifestyle.

In order to receive the grant, WKCF had to prepare a strategic plan that involves working closely with area nutrition and physical activity experts.

Komlofske said the experts can be from schools, recreation commissions and extension offices.

"We are very excited to be a part of this campaign," she said. "The idea is that small changes

in our lives can add up to big benefits."

According to studies done by the Trust of American Health agency, Kansas ranks as the 26th heaviest state in the nation.

The study also found that 81 percent of Kansas adults do not consume five or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day, while more than half do not meet the recommended guidelines for moderate physical activity.

The "change something" illustrates little changes that can be incorporated into busy, everyday lives.

KHF President and CEO Marni Vliet said simple things like taking the stairs instead of an elevator or eating an apple instead of drinking a soda could help a person gain control of a healthy lifestyle.

"With the 'change something' campaign, we hope to inspire adults to live healthier and happier, and to pass their healthy habits on to their children and grandchildren," Vliet said.

The campaign will run until December 2007.