



New England Asthma Awareness Group Awarded Grant for Community Health Advocacy

New England Asthma Regional Council to increase efforts to promote disease awareness

Contact: Laura Segal, 202-223-9870 or lsegal@tfah.org

Washington, DC, May 1, 2003 – Trust for America’s Health (TFAH), a national public health advocacy group, announced today that it has awarded the New England Asthma Regional Council (ARC) with an initial grant of \$2,500 to launch a comprehensive communications strategy aimed at promoting awareness of environmental factors that contribute to the high rate of asthma in the region’s six states. The new grant and the launch of ARC’s public education campaign coincides with the start of the annual national Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month.

“Environmental factors such as air pollution, cleaning agents and cigarette smoke are major triggers for a person with asthma,” said ARC Executive Director Laurie Stillman. “The media attention should help to put pressure on policy makers and make them more responsive to advocates’ demands for greater resources and commitments from the community.”

“Local groups are often at a disadvantage because of lack of resources,” said Lois Banks, TFAH’s Director of Community Health. “With this grant we hope to help strengthen ARC’s valuable campaign to increase the region’s awareness of asthma and its prevalence in New England.”

ARC will use the grant to begin a large-scale communications strategy that involves producing an organizational newsletter and creating an educational media campaign. The quarterly newsletter will highlight model environmental groups and the best practices in the region for addressing the growing asthma epidemic. Asthma is the most common chronic illness impacting children in the U.S.

About the TFAH Grants

The TFAH grant program is designed to help groups across the country that are working to improve the health of their communities and to demonstrate on a local level how health tracking can help prevent and reduce the number of chronic diseases. Overall, the grants, ranging from \$2,500 to \$15,000, are intended to help build community partnerships, which will assist in strengthening the nation’s public health defenses and increase support for a nationwide health tracking network, which are cornerstones of TFAH’s mission.

ARC is the third recipient of TFAH's Community Health Grants program, which is in its second year. Previous recipients are Community Against Pollution (CAP) of Anniston, AL and the Sarcoidosis Awareness Network of Prince George's County, MD.

CAP is using its award to build the organization's long-term sustainability by providing the necessary tools and resources it needs to work to protect their community from local health threats. It is calling for a comprehensive community-wide health study and the establishment of a clinic that would conduct environmental research and provide medical care.

TFAH awarded the Sarcoidosis Awareness Network a grant that is being used to promote awareness of sarcoidosis, an inflammatory disease that disproportionately affects African American women and leads to death in 5-10% of all cases.

To be eligible for the grant, groups must be a local, state or regional nonprofit organization that focuses on a disease cluster or works to establish or improve health tracking of chronic disease in their community.

TFAH's mission is to protect the health and safety of all communities from current and emerging threats by strengthening the fundamentals of our public health defenses. More information about TFAH is available at www.healthyamericans.org.

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