



Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation Grant Application

Any questions regarding the application process should be directed to Sheila B. Grogan, at 601-664-4525. Applicants must provide the following information to be considered for funding. Incomplete applications will be returned.

Organization Information

Organization Name: Town of Walnut

Mailing Address: 621 Main Street

City / State / Zip: Walnut, MS 38683

Telephone Number: 662-223-4405

Organization Website: walnut.ms

Does your organization have a smoke-free environment on all organization-owned property?

Yes No

If *No*, does your organization have plans to implement a smoke-free environment on all organization-owned property?

Yes; When? No

Does your organization have a tobacco-free (smokeless) environment on all organization-owned property?

Yes No

If *No*, does your organization have plans to implement a tobacco-free (smokeless) environment on all organization-owned property?

Yes; When? No

Does your organization have an electronic smoking device-free environment on all organization-owned property?

Yes No

If *No*, does your organization have plans to implement an electronic smoking device-free environment on all organization-owned property?

Yes; When? No

Have you or your organization ever received funding, in any way, from Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi or the Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation? Yes No

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If “yes,” describe the funding and the purpose for which it was used:

In 2014, the Town of Walnut was named "Healthy Hometown" in the small town category and was awarded \$25,000. Reviewing community survey results and data pertaining to several health factors collected from our community, we determined the lack of wellness facilities as being our biggest challenge. Providing a wellness center would make the most impact. We initially partnered with the North Tippah School district in developing a plan to modernize the school gym and add a wellness facility as part of the modernization. As these plans progressed, we applied for a second BCBS Foundation grant and in 2015 were named Mississippi's Healthiest Hometown, receiving \$50,000 for the continued effort to provide access to health facilities in our community. When the school determined they were unable to contribute toward the development, we negotiated the purchase of a large vacant building located nearby. The monies from BCBS Foundation are earmarked for cardio and strength training equipment in the new facility. A private corporation has committed \$250,000 for the purchase and modernization of this facility. Another project has already received approval from the Transportation Alternatives Program Fund, which will allocate around \$500,000 for the installation of sidewalks that will connect all of the Town's recreational facilities to the school.

Bottom line for "how it was used"...Because of the programs administered by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation, we began a journey toward improving the quality of life in our community. The \$75,000 received so far from BCBS and the \$75,000 requested at this time, will in effect become a \$1,000,000 investment in creating a healthy hometown. We thank you for this inspiration!!! We are on our way!

Project Information

Grantee Representative Name and Title: Vicki Skinner, Mayor

(Note: The Grantee Representative will officially execute the grant agreement.)

Mailing Address:

City/State/Zip: Walnut, MS 38683

Telephone Number: 662-223-4405

E-Mail: vickiskinner.townofwalnut@gmail.com

Project Director Name and Title: Greg James

(Note: The Project Director should have in-depth knowledge of the project and responsibility for management of supporting funds. All correspondence related to this grant application will be addressed to the Project Director).

Mailing Address: 130 James Street

City/State/Zip: Walnut, MS 38683

Telephone Number: 662-750-0369

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E-Mail: gregon@comcast.net

Name of project: Healthy Heroes Initiative

Amount Requested for this project: \$75,000

Projected Start Date: August 1, 2016 Projected End Date: July 31, 2017

Project Narrative

The project narrative should provide clear and concise responses to the items listed below:

(Note: If there is additional information that you believe would be useful in the review process, please provide it as an attachment.)

Organizational Picture: Answer the following questions to provide a clear picture of your organization.

- Describe your organization in terms of the area it serves.

The Town of Walnut has a population of just 754, but we serve as a hub for 10,000 residents living within a five mile radius of our town. Unemployment in Tippah County is relatively stable with the state average, but our workforce participation rate is just 50%. That means lots of people are not working due to chronic diseases that could have been ameliorated or eliminated. Our county is ranked in the bottom half of all counties in Mississippi for several critical health scores. For example, we are the worst of all 82 counties in stroke rate. Our residents are challenged with three main causes of stroke: obesity (35%), sedentary lifestyles (37% v 34% statewide) and smoking (25%). Industry studies show that employees who suffer from these conditions will cost a company between \$200 and \$600 per year in additional health care costs. Who pays for the same costs for people who are unemployed or out of the workforce? Health care costs are elevated because of preventable chronic conditions. The result is rising insurance premiums and tax burdens. Everyone in every demographic loses. The importance of improving quality of life in our communities is paramount. We are committed to begin that cycle of improvement in Walnut, and we hope to encourage a positive lifestyle change in the 10,000 residents that comprise our neighborhood--north Tippah county, Alcorn County (a few miles to the east), and Benton County (a few miles to the west). Among several measures, the rate of heart disease has improved, thanks in large part to the health and wellness initiative partnership with BCBS Foundation of Mississippi. But there is much work still to do. We appreciate this opportunity to provide elementary school students with the knowledge and tools that will enable them to change course. And we must create an opportunity for their parents and grandparents to do better.

The health and wellness committee was established by Walnut's board of aldermen on August 1, 2013. Alderman Greg James was named committee chair and Alderman Kevin Winter as vice-chair. The committee's mission is to improve health and wellness of Walnut and the surrounding communities by providing exemplary leadership, promoting healthy behavior, and engaging all stakeholders. Other committee members were selected based on expertise that covers a large demographic of professional and business leadership throughout the community. They include:

Lindsey Cardwell, Walnut High School Teacher, Beta Club Sponsor

Dr. Cody Clifton, Pharm. D; University of North Carolina, Moose Pharmacy

Mark Franz, Associate Principal, Golf Coach, Walnut Elementary School

Tommy Garrett, Policeman, Town of Walnut

Randall Hall, Chief, Walnut Volunteer Fire Department; Industry Representative

Caleb James, Engineer, Mississippi Department of Transportation

Tena James, Teller, The Peoples Bank

Tim James, Asst. Police Chief, Town of Walnut

Bonnie Jones, Principal, Walnut Elementary School

Dr. Norris Howell, DDS, Howell Dental Clinic

Sherie Norton, Family Nurse Practitioner, Pratt Family Medical Clinic

Vicki Skinner, Mayor, Town of Walnut, Certified Municipal Official, Emergency Medical Technician, Walnut Volunteer Fire Department

Beth Smith, Biology Teacher, Walnut High School

James Taylor, retired, construction industry

Rhonda Taylor, Family Nurse Practitioner, Treesap Medical Clinic

Dr. Amanda Wilburn, Pharm. D., CDE, CPT, Duncan's Pharmacy, Diabetes Counselor; Scout Coordinator

Cory Wilburn, Adjuster, Farm Bureau Insurance; Scout Leader, Troop 238

Haley Winter, Walnut Runs Co-Founder; Hilltop Designs; nutritional supplements consultant

The group has regularly scheduled meetings and provides monthly updates to the Board of Alderman. An agenda is published in advance for committee meetings and attendance is tracked with a sign-in sheet.

Project Description: Answer the following questions to provide a clear picture of the project for which funds are being requested.

- Describe what your organization hopes to accomplish and who will be helped by this project.

Our proposal includes both program and facility upgrades that are but a part of the overall health and wellness initiative to improve the quality of life in our community. Strategic plans provide for a continuous effort to expand and sustain opportunities for residents in Walnut and for our neighbors. We believe it is possible to equip students with the knowledge to make good decisions about healthy lifestyles. The Healthy Heroes program of study at the elementary schools and the outdoor wellness equipment will enhance opportunities for exercise, friendship, and development of social and leadership skills. It will also boost morale, camaraderie, enthusiasm, and help to encourage more residents to take advantage of wellness discovery programs and facilities.

The goal of the Healthy Heroes curriculum is to educate students with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to make healthy lifestyle choices, understand why it is important to be healthy and make them aware of community resources to help them achieve fitness goals. Two sessions are planned for each grade. The sessions will primarily be delivered by the Walnut Police Department with support from partnering law enforcement agencies as well as the Fire Department. The sessions will promote healthy eating habits and exercise while building good relations between students and law enforcement. Activities will include demonstration and performance of fitness routines, including how LEO's make good choices to live a healthy lifestyle. For students, the program will be delivered from the Healthy Heroes curriculum that will provide age-appropriate physical activities and teach them to make healthy food choices. Students will be actively engaged in learning about nutrition, health maintenance, fitness planning, and healthy living.

Finally, we will engage students to develop marketing plans that promote healthy lifestyles in the neighborhood through social media, banners and brochures. We believe the topics planned in the curriculum are critical components in changing the culture in our community. The Healthy Hero sessions are being scheduled on Fridays, so the Heroes can engage students to become ambassadors of the program. Students will be encouraged to apply their new knowledge of wellness with families and friends as they blaze a pathway to wellness. We look forward to making these investments in our children and in strengthening an already solid partnership with Walnut Elementary School.

Across all demographics, we want to provide and promote physical activity throughout the lifespan, with the goal of preventing and managing common chronic diseases which are prevalent in the community. The partnership between the Town of Walnut, Walnut Elementary School and the ensuing project with BCBS of MS Foundation will be documented to serve as a model to other municipalities within our county and state. We routinely encourage and promote wellness activities in municipalities across the state and will be honored to share our story (and our method) with them.

The funding requested from Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation of Mississippi will be used toward increasing physical activity to address the dismal "sedentary lifestyles" label (37% in Tippah county compared to 34% statewide). Physical activity requires a place to be active. We know the best return on investment will be for sites already owned by the town and school. Therefore, all funding requested will go toward providing and improving infrastructure on existing property. Use of the planned outdoor exercise equipment will be provided at no cost to the public.

It can be difficult for those who live, work, rest, snooze and play in dark buildings with poor lighting to become reenergized. That's why we propose to add outdoor exercise equipment at several high-traffic locations to help people exercise both their body and their brain. The sights and smells of being outside and the new décor brought on by the seasons are appealing to the most lethargic person. Plus, there's plenty of free oxygen and vitamin D to be found. We'll start them out easy by providing canopies and signage about the importance of sunscreen protection. The outdoor locations will include stations for plyometrics, balance, chin ups, presses, leg extensions, recumbent cycling, situps/back extensions and elliptical training. Eleven stations are planned for each of three locations: the walking track, the school playground, and Kidz Town playground. The equipment is easy to use and low-impact. Canopies are designed to block 97% of harmful UV rays and lower temps in sunny zones by up to 30 degrees.

Benefactors of the Healthy Heroes program have been segmented into three age groups to ensure we maintain appropriate balance among the groups. We seek to provide services and benefits for each as follows:

The Aging: Decades of research proves that resistance and cardio training prevents functional decline, reduces risk for falls and reduces risk factors for age-related diseases. All important factors that help older adults stay healthy and independent. The outdoor fitness equipment located along the walking track will provide the opportunity for moderate-intensity aerobic and strength training. The repaired track facility provides a safe environment, and the repaired tennis courts provide opportunity for social time with friends, playing a doubles match.

The Working-Age Adults: Creating and modifying environments to make it easier for people to walk or run is a strategy that not only helps increase physical activity and wellness, but will make our community a better place to live. The outdoor fitness equipment at both the walking track and at Kidz Town will provide the opportunity to engage in vigorous-intensity aerobic and strength training. The repaired track provides a safe environment for runners and walkers while the repaired tennis courts provide the opportunity for a brisk singles match.

The Children, grades K-5: We want to ensure our children have the opportunity to participate in three types of physical activity: aerobic, strength and bone-strengthening. We applaud schools' various sports teams which provide not only necessary exercise, but also necessary team-building skills. While team sports are essential, we also need to expose children to individual health and fitness activities. The outdoor aerobic and strength training equipment located on the school playground will help to fill this need. Teachers and staff can use the equipment to train youth on the proper way to exercise with the added benefit of providing a convenient facility for faculty and staff to use before, during and after school. Further, Walnut is administering a Safe Routes to Schools project funded by the Transportation Alternatives Program. Sidewalks are being constructed around the two blocks West of Highway 15. The school's playground area will now connect to the track, expanding the footprint and capacity of outdoor activity.

- Who will lead this project, and what are their qualifications?

The Walnut Board of Aldermen designated Alderman Greg James as the project lead and Alderman Kevin Winter as alternate lead. Greg is chairman of the Walnut Health and Wellness Committee, a certified municipal official and is the Project Manager at Northeast Mississippi Community College's Division of Workforce and Economic Development. Kevin is vice-chair of the HWC, a certified municipal official and is a Pharm. D., directing a health and wellness outreach program for Walmart throughout North Mississippi.

The Walnut Police Department will administer the classes. All personnel are certified LEO's. The officers leading classes will receive Healthy Heroes training upon approval by the BCBS of MS Foundation Board of Directors. Additional support and resources will be provided by Walnut Fire Department and the Walnut Health and Wellness Committee as needed. All groups are entities of the Town of Walnut and the individuals all hold certificates or degrees in their profession.

- Detail how your organization will provide the appropriate internal oversight and reporting regarding financial support received for this project.

All activities are tracked in a health and wellness subaccount in the town's general fund budget. Each month at the regular board of aldermen meeting, a report is provided by the chair of the Health and Wellness Committee. All spending and administration follows strict guidelines that are audited annually by a third party to ensure compliance. Further, we will adhere to guidelines as set forth by BCBS of MS Foundation in providing reports as required by the partnership.

- List the school names and grade levels of the local elementary schools in the school district.

Walnut Elementary School grades K-5

- Provide a timeline for the span of the project, including the frequency of the police officers' or firefighters' visits to elementary schools with wellness, nutrition, and fitness themed activities. Police officers and their partners will provide sessions once every three weeks throughout the school year. The schedule allows each student to receive training, instruction and hands-on experience twice per year. Police will begin to build rapport with the students and provide wellness training from the healthy heroes curriculum and endurance training using the outdoor equipment.



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Children will be exposed to hometown healthy heroes in a new light, learning not only about the importance of wellness, but also the importance of serving their community. The schedule below shows the expected rotation of the program. The dates will flex pending school needs and test scheduling.

August 19: Grade 1	January 27: Grade 1
September 9: Grade 2	February 17: Grade 2
September 30: Grade 3	March 10: Grade 3
October 28: Grade 4	March 31: Grade 4
November 18: Grade 5	April 21: Grade 5
December 16: Kindergarten	May 12: Kindergarten

- Provide an assessment of the risks and limitations of the project.

Risks associated with the addition and expansion of this equipment will be covered under the Town of Walnut's liability policy. All equipment will take into consideration accessibility by special needs residents which will exceed a.d.a. requirements. We have taken every precaution to ensure we serve all demographic segments of our population.

Project Budget

The project budget should include a detailed 12-month line-item budget. Direct expenses only are to be included, with no overhead expenses included.

Outdoor fitness equipment (3 x \$20k) \$60,000
Canopy for equipment (3 x \$5k) \$15,000

Total Request: \$75,000.00

The items will either be quoted or advertised for bid per state purchasing guidelines. The Town of Walnut will incur all administrative costs, advertising costs, and site prep costs for each of the items. Upon notification from BCBS Foundation of Mississippi, the board will direct the appropriate action for equipment with bid/quote openings within 60 days. Lead time is expected to be 90 days, so all equipment and installation should be complete within six months.

Timeline:

August: Receive approval
September: Board of Aldermen advertise for bids or request quotes for each item listed.
October: Board of Aldermen act on quotes received for associated items
November: Board of Aldermen act on bids received for associated items
February: all items delivered and installed

Project Budget Narrative

Clearly define the items for which the Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation will be financially responsible. Describe how you will sustain the program after the end of the grant period.

The outdoor fitness equipment will elevate our wellness initiative targeting all age groups. The equipment will be located at the elementary school playground, along the walking track at the ballpark, and adjacent to Kidz Town playground in the municipal park. Outdoor fitness park equipment will utilize open outdoor spaces and provide a springboard to improve community health, pride and image. The three locations will each provide machines that target aerobic activity, muscle strengthening, flexibility and core fitness. These systems will cost about \$20,000 each, for a total of \$60,000.

Canopies over the outdoor fitness equipment will prolong the life of the equipment and provide shelter from sun and showers. Natural colors will improve the appeal and create a space that draws people toward it. The canopies are \$5,000 each, totaling \$15,000.

All of the equipment is essential to the K-5 Healthy Heroes program, exposing children to a variety of fitness activities and expanding their horizon to build a better future. The Town of Walnut will maintain the equipment and facilities and the agreement with Walnut Elementary School will be reviewed annually to sustain a relevant program among the partners. Once the equipment is in place, the program is easily sustained with aggressive support from both the Town of Walnut and the school district.



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Final Checklist for Application

Incomplete applications (defined as missing one or more of the components listed below) will not be considered for funding and will be returned to the applicant. In two separate PDF files, please email the Grant Application and Attachments to Foundation@bcbsms.com with all necessary information. The two PDF files should be:

PDF file 1: Application Section:

The completed grant application will include the following:

- Organization Information
- Project Information
- Project Narrative
- Project Budget
- Project Budget Narrative

PDF file 2: Attachments Section:

- Resumes of project staff responsible for this initiative, or a position description if staff is not hired
- Memorandum of Understanding or Letter of Agreement with the school district superintendent agreeing to cooperate together with the city as it relates to the Healthy Heroes initiative.

By signing this application, I acknowledge on behalf of my organization that this document only serves as an application for a grant from the Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation and the information contained herein is accurate. The Foundation is under no obligation to award a grant to my organization or to fund our project.

(see attachments for signature page) /Greg James, HWC Chair; Alderman, Town of Walnut;

15 July 2016

Project Director's Signature, Title and Date