

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**MASON MATTERS RECEIVES \$135,035 ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION GRANT TO INCREASE CAREER AND COLLEGE-READINESS FOR YOUTH IN MASON COUNTY**

**Shelton, Washington (December 13, 2012)**

Mason Matters has been awarded a *Roadmaps to Health* Community Grant of \$135,035 by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) to improve educational attainment levels in our future workforce. The grant will support countywide career and college-readiness preparation activities that will result in more high school graduates moving into productive career paths after graduation.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has awarded *Roadmaps to Health* Community Grants to 18 coalitions across the United States to improve the health of those communities. These alliances aim to create healthier places to live, learn, work, and play. In its second year, the *Roadmaps to Health* grants now support a total of 30 state and local coalitions made up of leaders from government, business, education, health care, public health, and community organizations.

Educational level attainment is one of the strongest predictors of individual and community health. Higher educated individuals have more resources to access health-creating opportunities, such as safe housing, healthy coping strategies, and employment that provides living wages. Communities with a more highly educated workforce tend to have a more vibrant employer base and are better able to recruit and maintain a skilled workforce. In 2012, Mason County ranked 35<sup>th</sup> of 39 in the health status of its residents in the *County Health Rankings*. Typically, the county's high school graduation rate falls close to the state average of 73%. However, last year less than 50 percent of Mason County student who did graduate completed a FAFSA application, a critical step towards and indicator of, higher education intentions.

The grant will support business partners in creating 'World of Work' classroom learning experiences that support the application of new State of Washington grade and subject standards, known as Common Core. In addition, business partners will provide the students with a deeper understanding of career paths and job descriptions for their particular positions. The community will also launch a community campaign that builds a 'college-going culture'. This is one of the top priorities coming out of a Community Health Assessment and reflected in a Community Health Improvement Plan developed by a large group of community leaders convened by Mason County Public Health & Human Services and Public Hospital Districts #1 and #2.

The career and college-readiness initiative builds upon Mason County's six-year Student Success Initiative that has resulted in progressive improvements in high school graduation rates. In this exciting new project, Mason Matters is partnering with all seven of Mason County's public school districts, the Shelton-Mason Chamber of Commerce, North Mason Chamber of Commerce, Education Service District

Domestic Violence service provider, 2) building and establishing the Mason Community Dental Clinic, 3) initiating high school graduation strategy, and 4) developing and implementing homeless prevention plans. Mason Matters is funded by Public Hospital District #1 and Mason County Public Health and Human Services. For more information, visit Facebook and email [kak@co.mason.wa.us](mailto:kak@co.mason.wa.us)

#### **About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation**

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to health and health care, the Foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, measurable, and timely change. For 40 years the Foundation has brought experience, commitment, and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those it serves. When it comes to helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, the Foundation expects to make a difference in your lifetime. For more information, visit [www.rwjf.org](http://www.rwjf.org). Follow the Foundation on [Twitter \(@RWJF\)](https://twitter.com/RWJF) and [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/RobertWoodJohnsonFoundation) ([facebook.com/RobertWoodJohnsonFoundation](https://www.facebook.com/RobertWoodJohnsonFoundation)).

#### **About Community Catalyst**

Community Catalyst is a national non-profit consumer advocacy organization dedicated to quality affordable health care for all. Community Catalyst works in partnership with national, state and local organizations, policymakers, and foundations, providing leadership and support to improve the health of communities and to transform the health care system so it serves everyone. For more information, visit [www.communitycatalyst.org](http://www.communitycatalyst.org). Read or comment on our blog at <http://blog.communitycatalyst.org>. Follow us on [Twitter \(@healthpolicyhub\)](https://twitter.com/healthpolicyhub).