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**Yakima group earns grant from prestigious Robert Wood Johnson Foundation  
Roadmaps to Health Action Award includes \$10,000 grant, community health improvement  
coaching**

**YAKIMA, Wash.** – The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the nation’s largest philanthropy dedicated solely to health, has awarded a \$10,000 grant, plus consultation and coaching with leading population health experts, to a consortium of Yakima groups aimed at improving health outcomes and early learning for Yakima Valley children.

The Investing in Children Coalition is the early learning coalition serving south-central Washington, specifically Yakima and Kittitas counties. This consortium of engaged community partners collaborates to advocate for children and empower families, by providing opportunities to improve health with a goal of strengthening learning.

The award is one of 20 across the country and one of just two on the West Coast. The Memorial Foundation applied for and was awarded the grant on behalf of the coalition. The award will be administered by the Yakima Valley Community Foundation.

“This award is a tremendous coup for Yakima children and families as our community moves toward improving the overall health of our population,” said Jackie McPhee, co-chair of the Investing in Children Coalition and director of Children’s Village, a coalition partner that provides programs and services for children with special health care needs. “The reality is that healthy children learn, and we must take every opportunity to eliminate barriers to good health and learning.”

“Our kindergarten readiness work, including early learning collaboration and improving access to health care, has resulted in more Yakima Valley children entering school ready to learn. Students who have had high-quality early learning experiences do better academically, socially and emotionally, and this benefits the entire community,” says Stacie Marez, co-chair of the Investing in Children Coalition and early learning specialist for ESD 105, a coalition partner.

The Roadmaps to Health Action Award includes a \$10,000 grant and up to one year of consultation and coaching with health experts at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the

University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute to build a culture of health in the Yakima Valley.

Partners in the Investing in Children Coalition include: Bright Beginnings for Kittitas County, Building Vision, Central Washington University Center for Teaching and Learning, Catholic Family and Child Services Child Care Aware, Child Care Director's Network, Children's Village, Community Health of Central Washington, EPIC, ESD 105, Heritage University, Infant-Toddler Regional Steering Committee, Inspire Development Centers, Kittitas County Early Learning Coalition, Kittitas County Public Health Department, Rivers of Culture, Sunnyside Community Hospital, United Way of Central Washington, West Valley School District, Yakima County Department of Human Services, Yakima Health District, Yakima Interfaith Coalition-La Casa Hogar, Yakima Neighborhood Health, Yakima School District, Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic and Yakima Valley Memorial Hospital.

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