



Maeven Sipes  
Northern Illinois Food Bank  
273 Dearborn Court  
Geneva, Illinois 60134

**RE: 2015 WSPN Awards Nomination: Krystal Kleinschmidt & Becky McFarland**

Dear Ms. Sipes,

The Play For All Playground & Garden Foundation and the DuPage County Historical Museum Foundation cordially submit Krystal Kleinschmidt and Becky McFarland of FORWARD for the 2015 WSPN Grantmaker of the Year Award. As the development officer for the two aforementioned nonprofit organizations, I have been delighted to work with both of these young ladies on awarded grant programs through FORWARD. Their enthusiasm and energy to work with community partners is unparalleled.

Obesity in children is a known epidemic in the United States. In DuPage County alone, at least one of every four kindergartners entering the public school system are overweight or obese. In an effort to combat this growing disease, the FORWARD coalition was established. The group of community partners is dedicated to reversing the obesity trend in DuPage County by educating children and families about the importance of healthy eating and being physically active. The initiatives of FORWARD would not be possible without the hard work of Krystal Kleinschmidt and Becky McFarland, Coordinators for FORWARD.

According to its mission statement, "FORWARD will lead DuPage County, through a broad-based community coalition in promoting effective and sustainable policy, system, and environmental strategies for children and families to achieve a healthy lifestyle."

The FORWARD grant program is a major component of the overall initiative and is coordinated by Krystal and Becky. Since its implementation in 2012, FORWARD has awarded more than \$241,000 in grants to local community groups. The grant awards have helped to install vegetable gardens at schools and public playgrounds, purchase refrigerators/freezers for local food pantries, as well as to develop specialized exercise programming for children living with disabilities. These are just a few of the examples of grant monies that have been awarded to encourage policy, system, and environmental (PSE) changes in the community. These PSE changes are closely monitored by Krystal and Becky to ensure the awarded programs are broadly affecting a large population and are sustainable. The PSE changes are making being active and eating healthy easier where individuals live, work, learn, and play.

Beyond the grant program, both Krystal and Becky help the coalition members to connect with national and local experts in the area of physical activity/education, active transportation, and nutrition. With the leadership of Ms. Kleinschmidt and Ms. McFarland, FORWARD members attend meetings and educational events as well

as collaborate on community wellness initiatives. They bring a heightened sense of enthusiasm and creativity to every meeting. If you have never been to a FORWARD meeting, be sure to bring your tennis shoes! Often, meeting attendees are encouraged by Krystal and Becky to participate in short Zumba exercise sessions or other movement activities. These break-out sessions not only help members regain focus, but also energize them to use these simple activities in the classroom or office.

With the help of their director, Krystal and Becky help to lead nutrition and active transportation task forces with the coalition's over 600 healthcare professionals and community leaders are better known as the FORWARD Active Network (FAN). With Krystal and Becky's support, FORWARD has helped to collect three years of body mass index data throughout public schools in DuPage County, displayed 85 interactive health education displays around the community, adopted and use the *5-4-3-2-1 GO!* message with more than 7,680 students, and are helping municipal leadership teams actively build healthier communities by adopting strategic health-based policies. The FORWARD website also serves as a resource with robust lesson plans, handouts, and referrals for implementing the *5-4-3-2-1 GO!* message and where residents or visitors can find services for children 2-19 years old.

In 2014, the grant program is going through a restructuring and FORWARD received funding from Cadence Health, now part of Northwestern Medicine, to work with five child care centers in the Central DuPage Hospital service area. The centers complete five staff trainings and three self-assessments in the areas of screen time, nutrition, and physical activity. Each center will create an action plan and is eligible to apply for seed funding of up to \$2,000 to implement proposed changes.

Collectively through their massive outreach in the community, Krystal and Becky have published findings that the FORWARD program has helped DuPage County decrease and stabilize obesity rates by 1%. Krystal Kleinschmidt and Becky McFarland's work with grant recipients and the community to collect BMI data, plan events, and spread the *5-4-3-2-1-GO!* message is making an impact and is helping to decrease the likelihood of more chronic diseases like high blood pressure, high cholesterol, type 2 diabetes, and other health, social, and psychological problems in the community's children. They are to be commended and recognized for their eagerness to improve the current and future health of the community.

Should you have any questions relating to this nomination, please feel free to reach out to me directly. Thank you for your assessment of our nomination, we look forward to your favorable review.

Rebecca McFarland & Krystal Kleinschmidt  
111 N. County Farm Road, Wheaton, Illinois 60187  
630-682-7400  
Rebecca.mcfarland@dupagehealth.org; Krystal.kleischmidt@dupagehealth.org

Sincerely,



Sarah A. O'Donnell

Director of Development

DuPage County Historical Museum Foundation & Play For All Playground & Garden Foundation

Phone: 630-510-4986 Cell: 630-210-2875

sodonnell@wheatonparks.org