

## Kansas City Kansas Public Library Wins National “Fit for Life” Grant

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In recognition of the critical need for free, reliable health information in Kansas City, Kansas, the national non-profit organization Libraries for the Future (LFF) has awarded the Kansas City Kansas Public Library a grant



of \$12,000. The grant will allow for a full year of “Fit for Life” programming to address physical and brain health across the lifespan. Fit for Life programs will be held at all KCK Public Library locations.

The Kansas City Kansas Public Library system is one of 17 across the nation to receive “Fit for Life” grants, made possible by the generous support of MetLife Foundation and overseen by Libraries for the Future (LFF). The KCK Public Library applied for the competitive grant to promote lifelong health and wellness to the community. “Fit for Life” will emphasize both physical health and the new field of “brain health,” using five pillars of brain health that have emerged from the latest scientific research: diet, physical exercise, intellectual challenge, mental stimulation through new experiences, and socialization.

“We look forward to participating in the Fit for Life program,” said Interim Library Director Teresa Garrison. “Libraries have always been about healthy minds, so this is a natural fit. With an increased focus on health resources and programs, we will be able to promote healthy lifestyles for many more of our patrons.”



The Kansas City Kansas Public Library won its “Fit for Life” grant by proposing the “KC Kan Be Fit” program. It aims to reach all ages, but especially teens and seniors, with a menu of programming options, including health screenings and the chance to try out Nintendo’s new Wii Fit system.

LFF requires each participating library to partner with at least five community organizations to expand possibilities for community outreach and activities. The Kansas City Kansas Public Library’s partners include Dykes Medical Library at the University of Kansas Medical Center, the Health Careers Pathways Program, Storytellers Inc., Kansas Public Health Association, Inc., and the State Library of Kansas.

“This innovative collaboration will bring a renewed interest in health and provide an opportunity for each participant to engage in personal responsibility for his or her individual healthy lifestyle,” said Marcia Pomeroy, Associate Director of the Health Careers Pathways Program. “The Kansas City Kansas Public Library continues to shine as a role model for excellence in the community.”

As part of its program, the Kansas City Kansas Public Library will launch a community-wide public

awareness campaign to promote the importance of fitness and nutrition for all ages. The five participating branches will offer health programming for all ages, with a focus on teens and seniors, distribute free health publications, and record the accomplishments of individual participants and the group as a whole.

“Public libraries play a growing role in filling the urgent need for free, reliable health information, especially at a time when so many people lack easy access to doctors and nurses,” said Bruce Astrein, executive director of LFF. “They already promote the building blocks of brain health by involving people of all ages in forums, conversations, the search for knowledge, computers, artwork, and dynamic programs.”

*Fit for Life* is an enhanced follow-on to two earlier co-ventures between Libraries for the Future and MetLife Foundation. The original *Fit for Life* offered library-based fitness programming and promotion for teens and their families, while the pilot project *Get Real Get Fit* showed the power of libraries to involve teens in fitness programs that extend beyond the library’s walls.

MetLife Foundation asked LFF to create the all-new *Fit for Life* to expand the target audience beyond teens to the full lifespan, and beyond physical health to the emerging field of brain health. There is a growing body of scientific and medical knowledge on the importance of brain health, but few channels for communicating new findings to the public. LFF will engage the assistance of the Dana Alliance for Brain Initiatives, a nonprofit organization of more than 265 leading neuroscientists, to ensure that *Fit for Life* reflects the most accurate, up-to-the-minute research findings to support physical and brain health across the lifespan.

“MetLife Foundation is committed to health education, both physical fitness and brain health, for people of all ages,” said Sybil Jacobson, President and CEO of MetLife Foundation. “We are proud to partner with Libraries for the Future on *Fit for Life*, which demonstrates the Foundation’s commitment to providing the public with knowledge that can help people not only live longer, but live better.”

The Kansas City Kansas Public Library will build a “Fit for Life” web page as part of its “KC Kan Be Fit” program. In addition, the national *Fit for Life* website ([www.fitforlifelibraries.org/](http://www.fitforlifelibraries.org/)) will offer detailed information on each program component, as well as activities for library participants and all web users, as the program gets under way in early 2009.

The Kansas City Kansas Public Library serves a population of more than 150,000 with five locations and the only bookmobile in the metropolitan Kansas City area. The library strives to fill the need for accessible health information by maintaining an excellent consumer health collection, including books and health-related databases. The library also maintains WyCoHelp, an online database of community organizations, many of which offer health-related services. Learn more at [www.kckpl.lib.ks.us](http://www.kckpl.lib.ks.us).

Libraries for the Future is a national nonprofit organization that supports innovation and investment in America’s libraries. Through its cutting-edge programs, research, re grants, and trainings, LFF helps local

libraries address the ever-changing needs of their communities. For more information, please visit [www.lff.org](http://www.lff.org).

MetLife Foundation was established by MetLife to continue the company's long tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement. The Foundation supports programs that improve education, promote health, encourage parental involvement and family engagement, help revitalize neighborhoods and stress accessibility and inclusion. In recent years, a focus on Alzheimer's and aging issues has been added. MetLife Foundation stresses education in all its programs. For more information about the Foundation, please visit [www.metlife.org](http://www.metlife.org).

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