



City of Baton Rouge  
Parish of East Baton Rouge

Press Release  
Thursday, August 23, 2012

---

## Mayor's Healthy City Initiative Awarded \$1 Million Grant

### *Funds Will Enable New Mobile Market to Start Rolling in Early 2013*

The Fresh Beginnings Program, developed through Mayor-President Melvin L. "Kip" Holden's Healthy City Initiative, has been awarded a \$1 million grant from the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana Foundation's Challenge for a Healthier Louisiana Grant Program. The purpose of the funding is to support innovative partnerships that promote healthy eating and active lifestyles which are aimed at reducing the rate of obesity in Louisiana, especially among children.

The Fresh Beginnings proposal was selected to improve the health of children and adults in underserved or high-risk populations. Fresh Beginnings community partners include the Big River Economic and Agricultural Development Alliance (BREADA), East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority, Together Baton Rouge, Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center & Our Lady of the Lake Children's Hospital, Project Fit America, Evlyn J. Daniel Education Foundation and the East Baton Rouge Parish School System (EBRPSS). In addition to the Challenge Grant, the community partners are raising an additional \$1.2 million to implement this comprehensive program.

A major component of Fresh Beginnings is a mobile farmers market designed to make healthy foods available in East Baton Rouge neighborhoods with little or no access to grocery stores.

"We are talking about areas of the parish where people have limited access to foods like fresh produce, dairy products and meat necessary for a healthy diet," Mayor Holden said. "The Fresh Beginnings Program will allow us to take healthy foods into these neighborhoods with our new Mobile Market that is similar to those operating successfully in Detroit, Nashville, and New Mexico."

The new Mobile Market Program will also increase healthy food choices for families who participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Sunanna Chand, Community Outreach Coordinator for the Mayor's Healthy City Initiative, said the Mobile Market is slated to open in early 2013 and will affect over 61,000 residents.

"It will feature some of the same foods found at the weekly Red Stick Farmers Markets on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. We will be taking the Farmers Market to people who have trouble not only accessing the current markets but also shopping at grocery stores," Chand said, noting that additional expansions will be made at four corner stores to include fresh produce. The offerings will change with the seasons.

The Fresh Beginnings program will also provide services to four public schools within zip codes 70805, 70807, and 70802 to increase the amount of physical activity in classrooms and during P.E. and to give students, teachers and parents the resources they need to learn about physical fitness, nutrition, and self-esteem.

Toward that end, the schools will receive new playground equipment and information on student activities. Installation of the equipment should be completed by the end of December and teacher workshops on nutrition, physical activity, anti-smoking and anti-bullying will begin in January of 2013.

In total, Fresh Beginnings and 11 other Louisiana programs will receive \$10.2 million from the Blue Cross Foundation to assist in reducing the rising obesity rate across the State. Among the 50 states, Louisiana currently ranks sixth for adult obesity and fourth for childhood obesity.

Throughout the funding period, which begins September 1, 2012, the Blue Cross Foundation will work with Pennington Biomedical Research Center in Baton Rouge to administer all 12 grants and to measure their effectiveness in reducing obesity in Louisiana communities. The progress of each program will be posted at [www.ourhomelouisiana.org](http://www.ourhomelouisiana.org).

The Challenge Grant Program is estimated to impact more than 1.7 million adults and children in Louisiana.