

**Aetna Foundation and Junior Blind Join Forces to Fight Childhood Obesity Among Blind and Visually Impaired Children in Los Angeles**

***-- Aetna Foundation to award $25,000 grant at annual Halloween Carnival --***

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LOS ANGELES--([EON: Enhanced Online News](http://eon.businesswire.com/))--Junior Blind of America, a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping children and adults who are blind, visually impaired or multi-disabled achieve independence, will be awarded a $25,000 grant by the Aetna Foundation at the organization’s annual Children’s Halloween Carnival on October 26.

**“We are especially concerned for the children we serve. They already face limited opportunities for physical activity due to their vision loss, and many come from a community where one in three children is considered to be obese.”**

The funding will allow Junior Blind to offer its healthy living after school program free of charge to both sighted and visually impaired children from low-income families. The after school program combines nutrition education, community gardening and physical activities that can help children develop healthy eating and exercise habits that can lead to better health over their lifetimes. Kids learn how to make healthy meals in Junior Blind’s adaptive kitchens and participate in at least one hour of sports and physical activity daily at the nonprofit’s multi-sensory playground, aquatics center and other adaptive athletic facilities.

“Childhood obesity has become a national epidemic with devastating long-term consequences,” said Miki Jordan, president & CEO of Junior Blind. “We are especially concerned for the children we serve. They already face limited opportunities for physical activity due to their vision loss, and many come from a community where one in three children is considered to be obese.”

Junior Blind’s After School Enrichment Program (ASEP) brings together children who are blind or visually impaired with peers who are sighted and offers them a curriculum revolved around healthy living. The only program of its kind in Los Angeles, ASEP serves 80 children, ages eight to 13, on Junior Blind’s campus in South Los Angeles—a community with the highest childhood obesity rate in Los Angeles County. Additionally, nearly 90 percent of the children enrolled in ASEP come from low-income families and minority backgrounds.

“We are grateful to the Aetna Foundation for their support of our efforts to help children whose disability, life circumstance and community put them at greater risk for childhood obesity and future health problems,” said Jordan.

Garth Graham, M.D., M.P.H., president of the Aetna Foundation, says that Junior Blind’s comprehensive approach can have a lasting impact on the children in its program.

“We know that eating lots of fruit and vegetables and being physically active can help prevent many of today’s lifestyle-related chronic diseases, such as diabetes and heart disease,” Graham said. “We are pleased to support Junior Blind’s After School Enrichment Program and help kids in South Los Angeles establish healthy habits at a young age, especially those who have an elevated risk of being overweight or obese.”

The Aetna Foundation and its parent company, Aetna Inc. (NYSE: [AET](http://cts.businesswire.com/ct/CT?id=smartlink&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.aetna.com%2Finvestors-aetna%2Findex.html&esheet=50720332&newsitemid=20131001006709&lan=en-US&anchor=AET&index=1&md5=f93cb8a7be49998d4587aad1f888d644)) have been longtime friends of Junior Blind. Aetna’s employees have volunteered at Junior Blind’s annual Halloween and Holiday Carnivals and at the Junior Blind Olympics for a number of years. In 2011, Aetna was a lead sponsor of the Junior Blind Olympics.

**About Junior Blind of America**

For 60 years, Junior Blind has helped people of all ages who are blind, visually impaired or multi-disabled achieve independence. Each year, Junior Blind provides services to thousands of individuals and their families through programs that offer innovative and individualized methods of education, recreation, training and rehabilitation. These life-changing programs are designed to empower infants, children, teens and adults to reach their highest levels of potential, independence and self-esteem. To learn more, please visit [www.juniorblind.org](http://cts.businesswire.com/ct/CT?id=smartlink&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.juniorblind.org&esheet=50720332&newsitemid=20131001006709&lan=en-US&anchor=www.juniorblind.org&index=2&md5=dddd3108c254bb55b7d8fd8dcf53add7).

**About the Aetna Foundation**

The Aetna Foundation, Inc. is the independent charitable and philanthropic arm of Aetna Inc. Since 1980, Aetna and the Aetna Foundation have contributed more than $427 million in grants and sponsorships, including more than $14.6 million awarded in 2012. As a national health foundation, we promote wellness, health, and access to high-quality health care for everyone. This work is enhanced by the time and commitment of Aetna employees, who have volunteered four million hours since 2003. The Aetna Foundation’s current giving is focused on addressing the rising rate of adult and childhood obesity in the U.S.; promoting racial and ethnic equity in health and health care; and advancing integrated health care. For more information, visit [www.aetnafoundation.org](http://cts.businesswire.com/ct/CT?id=smartlink&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.aetnafoundation.org&esheet=50720332&newsitemid=20131001006709&lan=en-US&anchor=www.aetnafoundation.org&index=3&md5=c783c48f3ba6dc707014d1c65d569b56).

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