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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sunflower Foundation Announces 2016 Advocacy Fellows

TOPEKA – The Sunflower Foundation Advocacy Fellowship Class of 2016 has been announced. This multi-sector class of 15 leaders from across Kansas will learn how to become more effective advocates, with a special emphasis on utilizing civil discourse as a tool to bridge the partisan divide.

The Advocacy Fellowship is part of the foundation’s non-partisan advocacy initiative, which is designed to provide education and training opportunities for Kansas leaders whose work can help shape public policy and ultimately improve the health of Kansans. A total of 74 leaders have graduated from the Fellowship’s first five classes.

This year’s class was recruited from seasoned and emerging leaders in a variety of sectors, including health, business, social service, faith, local government and education.

“Improving community health requires a multi-sector approach to advocacy,” said Billie Hall, President and CEO of the Sunflower Foundation. “These 15 Kansas leaders bring a diversity of knowledge and experience from a variety of sectors. Together, they will be able to learn from each other and work collaboratively toward cross-cutting approaches aimed at improving Kansans’ health and wellbeing.”

The program includes six sessions over the course of a year, including a visit to Washington, D.C. Topics include developing advocacy strategies, building coalitions and grassroots efforts, navigating the political process and working with the media. This year, special emphasis will be placed on utilizing civil discourse in advocacy efforts.

“The public policy challenges facing Kansas today are difficult ones. Working toward solutions to these challenges becomes all the more difficult when strident, partisan rhetoric dominates our public discourse,” Hall said. “That is why this year’s Fellowship class will explore advocacy approaches rooted in objectivity and respect for differing experiences and perspectives.”

The goal of the Fellowship is to equip these leaders with advocacy skills that can help bridge political divides in order to achieve common goals.

**For more information,
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HEALTH CARE FOR KANSANS

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“Bringing together nonprofit leaders with a wide range of experiences and interests brings a new voice to policy discussions – on a local, state and national level,” Hall said. “These Fellows, as well as the classes before them, are committed to learning, engaging and building a network across the state that can address health care issues facing us now and in the future.”

Leaders selected for the Advocacy Fellowship Class of 2016 are:

GARDEN CITY

Tim Cruz
Safety and Health Specialist, [Kansas Department of Transportation](#)

Liz Sosa
CEO, [Public Square Communities, Inc.](#)

HUTCHINSON

Jason Ball
President and CEO, [Hutchinson/Reno County Chamber of Commerce](#)

KANSAS CITY

Maureen Mahoney
Chief of Staff for Mayor Mark Holland, [Unified Government of Wyandotte County](#)

Eva Schulte
President and CEO, [Communities Creating Opportunity](#)

LAWRENCE

Benet Magnuson
Executive Director, [Kansas Appleseed](#)

Chris Tilden
Director of Community Health, [Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department](#)

IOLA

David Toland
Executive Director, [Thrive Allen County](#)

OVERLAND PARK

Tracey Osborne
President, [Overland Park Chamber of Commerce](#)



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PITTSBURG

Jason Wesco
Executive Vice President, [Community Health Center of Southeast Kansas](#)

TOPEKA

Denise Cyzman
Executive Director, [Kansas Association for the Medically Underserved](#)

Annie McKay
Executive Director, [Kansas Center for Economic Growth](#)

Sheldon Weisgrau
Director, [Health Reform Resource Project](#)

WICHITA

Vernetta Dixon
Behavioral Consultant and Prevention Coordinator, [HealthCore Clinic](#)

Kaye Monk-Morgan
Program Director, [Upward Bound Math Science Center at Wichita State University](#)

The Sunflower Foundation Advocacy Fellowship began in 2008. For more information about the program and to read brief bios of each of the 2016 Advocacy Fellows, visit the Sunflower Foundation website at SunflowerFoundation.org/fellowship2016.

The Sunflower Foundation is a charitable organization with a mission to serve as a catalyst for improving the health of Kansans. The foundation's funding priorities are health care, healthy living and advocacy. Learn more at SunflowerFoundation.org.

→ **For more information, contact Phil Cauthon, Director of Communications, Sunflower Foundation, (785) 232-3000 or pcauthon@sunflowerfoundation.org.**

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