

At the heart of Jackson is a community's passion for the wellness of the state at large. Mississippi ranks among the highest in the nation with incidences of cardiovascular disease and obesity, making health a top priority among its citizens. Founded in 2009, the Jackson Heart Foundation has led the fight against heart disease through education, prevention, and early detection.

“We realized a need for local heart health awareness in the metro area. We decided to focus our efforts to promote healthy eating by providing combi ovens in area schools, as well as promoting physical activity through our recent opening of the Mississippi Children's Museum permanent exhibit, *Ride the Trails*. It is our belief that inspiring children and families through these activities will produce healthier outcomes for our citizens,” said Dr. Harper Stone, Chairman of the Jackson Heart Foundation.

The foundation's funding is fully dedicated to the Jackson Metro and surrounding areas,, allowing its board to introduce important health initiatives for schools and the community as a whole. Their health education acts have included CPR & AED training, school meal programs, combi ovens, playgrounds, and gardens for K-12 schools. Since their founding, the nonprofit has invested more than two million dollars in health programs for central Mississippi.

For 14 years, the Jackson Heart Foundation has contributed to many wellness programs, including this summer's opening of the Mississippi Children's Museum's permanent exhibit, *Ride the Trails*. The three accessible, static bikes are a wonderful introduction to the sport and showcase three immersive, local bike trails: the Museum Trail, the Belhaven Mountain Bike Trail, and the Eastover Trail. It is the goal of the Children's Museum to promote physical exercise and general health awareness in Jackson.

After the exhibit's ribbon cutting, the Jackson Heart Foundation continues its work with the city's newest and most ambitious community development: the Museum Trail, a multi-use trail connecting Jackson to museums, parks, and communities. Through unprecedented collaboration with private funders and thought leaders within the community, this transformative project serves as a catalyst for both economic and recreational growth in Jackson. The trail's thoughtful design, coupled with inspiring artwork by Jackson-based artists featured along the trail, figuratively and literally connects people to all of the bright spots within the city.

As the majority sponsor of the trail, the foundation has been a part of every groundbreaking stage. Now that the fourth phase has begun, the Museum Trail's extension to the

Mississippi Children's Museum and Jackson's downtown museums is projected to be completed in three to four months, realizing its goal of connecting Jackson's history, art, and recreation together. This program is devoted to creating a healthier Jackson that increases access to outdoor exercise, promotes mental health, and cultivates the quality of life for the community.

By educating and encouraging healthy lifestyles for Mississippians, a common knowledge of heart disease and obesity prevention will develop, paving the way for a healthy city. "Doctors want to make small changes that carry on through the generations," said Dr. Clay Hays, Vice Chairman of the Jackson Heart Foundation. "By simply changing the mindset of healthy eating and exercise, we can make a difference and leave Jackson a better and healthier place to live. A healthier future is possible."

***About Jackson Heart Foundation:***

*The Jackson Heart Foundation is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization founded in August 2009 with the mission to lead the fight against heart disease in our community through education, prevention, and early detection.*

*Mississippi is rated among the highest in the nation with incidences of cardiovascular disease. Based on this statistic, we believe it is vital to the health and well-being of our citizens to educate and encourage healthy lifestyles for our families and to increase awareness among the public about heart disease prevention.*

*Our vision is a community where individuals live healthier and more productive lives because cardiovascular disease was prevented before it became a problem ... a community where heart disease doesn't affect each and every one of us.*

*Board members and staff include Dr. Harper Stone, Dr. Clay Hays, Morgan Geary, Abby James, Walter Weems, Doug Hederman, Charlotte McNeel, Bill Lee, Pryor Lampton, Patricia McClure, Lee Thigpen, David Pharr, and Ray Neilsen.*