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## Jackson County Health Department

Kevin Edward Aston, M.P.H., Health Commissioner • Jill Ann Neff, D.O., Medical Director

March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2015

Office of Governor John Kasich  
Ohio Community Connectors Grant – Team of Application Reviewers

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of the Jackson County Health Department of which I serve as Health Commissioner, as well as on behalf of the Jackson County Drug Task Force of which I am the chairperson, I wholeheartedly support RSVP of the Ohio Valley's funding proposal for the Ohio Community Connectors Grant to develop youth mentoring programming here in Jackson County.

I sincerely believe that youth mentoring programming in Jackson County would significantly bolster the health and wellbeing of our young people. Jackson County is a mental health professionally-underserved, rural community, so any additional services to our community's youth would bring the county closer to parity with the resources and support found in urban areas. But if funded, this grant would not just provide mentorship and counseling to Jackson County youths, but would do so by making use of organizations and the professionals associated with them that are already making inroads into guiding our youth. I can attest that the people of partnering organizations including the Jackson City Schools, the Wellston City Schools, the Gallia-Jackson-Meigs ADAMH Board, Health Recovery Services, the Area Agency on Aging District 7, and the local Ohio State University Extension have all already worked hard to mentor the next generation of Jackson County citizens. What this grant award would do is allow all these efforts to synergize and have a much great impact. Looking at the available statistics about my community, I can clearly see that the Jackson County rates of unhealthy physical behaviors such as physical inactivity and smoking as well as drug abuse and overdose are among the highest in the state. Behavior patterns form at a young age, so the future of our community hinges on how our well we can influence these behaviors before they become set. The positive, goal-oriented mentoring that will flow from the Ohio Community Connectors Grant would do just that.

The RSVP of the Ohio Valley has already clearly demonstrated in my eyes that it is willing and interested in discovering and addressing the unmet needs of Jackson County youths, and this funding proposal is yet more proof of that commitment. This proposal is a very positive opportunity for our community which has long suffered from a dire lack of resources. Please give this funding application careful consideration, and know that if you grant this award you will have made a substantial impact on the health and well being of thousands of people in Jackson County and in the broader Ohio Valley region.

Sincerely,

Kevin Edward Aston, M.P.H., R.S.  
Health Commissioner  
Jackson County Health Department