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### **State Grant to Fund Health Education for Oak Park Teens**

Teenagers ages 13 to 19 will soon have access to important health education thanks to a state grant administered by the Oak Park Department of Public Health through *Friday Night Place*, a local teen outreach program operated by Fellowship Community Services, 1106-10 Madison St.

The new education program is based on the curriculum of “Becoming a Responsible Teen” – or BART – a national program recognized for its ability to create effective communication with teens about critical issues such as sex education.

Public Health Director Georgeen Polyak, Ph.D., said the partnership between the Village and Fellowship Community Services that helped bring BART to Oak Park was a logical way to combine community resources to achieve mutual goals.

“We’ve worked with Fellowship Community Services on other youth-oriented projects before,” Polyak said. “When we applied for the grant, it just seemed like a natural choice to partner with them again.”

Fellowships’ *Friday Night Place* is an after school outlet where teens from the community come and play basketball and other games, while also having a series of educational lessons. Village Information Coordinator Ranjana Das, M.P.H., says the program is ideal for teaching teens the importance of their overall health – while still having fun.

“*Friday Night Place* is a setting where teens can have fun and learn something at the same time,” Das said. “High school and junior high students between the age of 13 and 19 participate on alternate Fridays. They play basketball and other games, and in between, they learn about the importance of a healthy lifestyle.”

The new program is set to begin in November and continue through May. A \$5,000 grant from the Illinois Department of Public Health’s “Communities of Color Initiative” made the program possible.

Public health officials say that the program will offer teens an outlet to both learn and ask questions about their health, the type of discourse both Das and Polyak agree will help keep the next generation of Oak Parkers be healthy for the long run.

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Teen Health Education  
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“Teaching the importance of good health to the youth is a key to keeping them healthy for a lifetime,” said Polyak. “We’re pleased the Village is able to play a significant role in creating and implement health education programs for teenagers.”

For more information on the program and other teen health initiatives, call 358.5480 or email [health@oak-park.us](mailto:health@oak-park.us). Information also is posted at [www.oak-park.us](http://www.oak-park.us) – just mouse over the Departments tab, click on Public Health and look for the links.

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