



METRO

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Kidz Health program loses foundation funding for 2009

APRIL
McCLELLAN-COPELAND
Plain Dealer Reporter

The Saint Luke's Foundation has decided to cut \$1 million from Kidz Health 2020, a nonprofit that serves children and youths in Cleveland's Mount Pleasant neighborhood.

The foundation decided to withhold the money for 2009 after an evaluation by a consulting firm found that community participation in Kidz Health programs was too low to have the impact on the community that the foundation had hoped for.

Kidz Health 2020's annual budget is \$1 million and all of it comes from the Saint Luke's Foundation.

The money that had been invested in Kidz Health will be re-invested in other programs that serve families in Mount Pleasant.

"Our commitment to the neighborhood is stronger than it ever was," said Denise San Anto-

nio Zeman, president and chief executive of the Saint Luke's Foundation.

Since 1999, the foundation has provided more than \$7.1 million to Kidz Health 2020's budget, Zeman said.

"They were never quite performing optimally," Zeman said. "The young lady who runs it [Valerie Hicks] is very impressive. She has a long career in the mental health field. I wouldn't fault them for not trying. They worked very hard."

Joyce Lee, president of the Kidz Health board, said the organization made a decision at a Tuesday night meeting about whether to continue operations. But the board will not discuss the decision until it notifies Saint Luke's on Friday, she said.

Lee said the nonprofit has faced many challenges, including three executive directors since 2002.

"We understand St. Luke's decision," Lee said. "We do feel that

we've made progress and we have seen more families in the first six months of this year than in previous years."

The Saint Luke's Foundation paid for a think tank for three years that planned Kidz Health 2020 before its incorporation in 2002. Kidz Health began with the goal of improving the health of children. In later years, programs for family and older youths, such as parenting classes, nutrition and fitness and tutoring, were included.

Kidz Health 2020 is one of eight transformational initiatives that the foundation supports in three neighborhoods that were previously served by the former Saint Luke's Medical Center: Mount Pleasant, Buckeye-Larchmere and Woodland Hills. These initiatives are supposed to make a positive, long-term impact on the community.

To reach this Plain Dealer reporter: amcclellan@plained.com, 216-999-4927