



news release

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

UTAH HEALTH REFORMER JUDI HILMAN ONE OF TEN AMERICANS CHOSEN TO RECEIVE \$125,000 NATIONAL AWARD FOR IMPROVING LOCAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to Present Hilman with the 2008 Community Health Leaders Award for Boosting Health Care Opportunities for Tens of Thousands of Utah Residents

PRINCETON, NJ (October 27, 2008) – The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation today announced Judi Hilman, a fixture in the Utah health reform debate, health policy expert and author of numerous health care advocacy publications, as one of ten exemplary Americans who will receive the Community Health Leaders Award for 2008. The distinguished annual award honors extraordinary men and women from all over the country who conquer huge obstacles and take commanding action in local communities to tackle some of the most challenging health and health care problems facing the nation. Awardees are celebrated with national recognition and \$125,000.

This year, more than 800 nominations were submitted from across the United States. Through a rigorous process, the Foundation selected ten outstanding individuals, all of whom have worked to improve health conditions in their communities with exceptional creativity, courage and commitment. The Foundation chose Hilman this year for leading the Utah Health Policy Project (UHPP) in its efforts to obtain quality, affordable and comprehensive health care coverage for all Utah residents. Hilman will accept her award on October 29 at a special ceremony honoring each of the 2008 recipients at the Community Health Leaders Annual Meeting in San Diego.

"Judi Hilman exhibits outstanding courage, determination and extraordinary empathy on behalf of individuals and families least able to understand or navigate a system with Machiavellian complexity," said Janice Ford Griffin, national program director for the award. "She is fearless and relentless in persuading policymakers to understand the consequences of their actions and that their opportunities to improve access to quality health care will improve the quality of life for the entire state."

Hilman co-founded UHPP in 2006 as a direct response to startling statistics showing that nearly 400,000 Utah residents live without health insurance of any kind. She aggressively works for a health care system in Utah that provides medically necessary care to every resident of the state. Core uninsured communities affected by her advocacy are low-income and medically underserved residents, including Medicaid and CHIP (Children's Health Insurance Program) enrollees, and members of Utah's small but growing ethnic minority populations. Hilman is committed to eliminating the number of Utahans at risk for illness and death due to a lack of health insurance.

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Judi Hilman Wins National Award
Page 2 of 2

Hilman's dedication has been key to victories in UHPP's efforts to develop systemic solutions to the Utah health care crisis including:

- Restoring eligibility and medically necessary Medicaid services for thousands of low-income adults;
- Passing Senate Bill 42, which implemented a Preferred Drug List in the state's Medicaid program and established a mechanism to reinvest savings in improving access to care;
- Helping to reopen and fully fund CHIP to serve 12,000 uninsured children annually;
- Creating a state minority health office at the Utah Department of Health and a public-private partnership to eliminate health disparities throughout Utah; and
- Modifying and passing HB133 (Health System Reform), launching a health system reform process in Utah.

"What an incredible honor it is to receive this award and what exquisite timing, considering that so many of our issues are coming to a head this year," said Hilman. "We formed the UHPP to solve the health care crisis, a tall order in any state but especially in Utah. To have the backing and recognition of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is something for which we are extremely grateful. We plan to live up to this extraordinary honor."

Under Hilman's leadership, UHPP has achieved success in selling the importance of health system reform to legislators in one of the most conservative states in the nation and who are generally not known for supporting programs such as Medicaid and CHIP. In an environment where the vast majority of state legislators have no first-hand experience with poverty, the organization has managed to draw lawmakers' attention to the personal health ills and dire health insurance needs of Utah's most vulnerable residents. In a letter of recommendation supporting Hilman's nomination for the award, State Representative David Clark, Republican majority leader, wrote that Hilman cut through Utah's historic reluctance to invest in the Medicaid program by linking it to self-sufficiency, "a goal that even the staunchest conservatives embrace."

Hilman and each of the 2008 awardees will join the ranks of 153 Community Health Leaders in 45 states and Puerto Rico honored since 1993. The \$125,000 award consists of a \$20,000 personal gift and \$105,000 to support their work. In addition to Hilman in Utah, this year, Community Health Leaders hail from Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Alabama, North Dakota, California, Massachusetts, New York and Hawaii. Nominations for the 2009 Community Health Leaders Award can be submitted through November 7, 2008. For details on how to submit a nomination, including eligibility requirements and selection criteria, visit www.communityhealthleaders.org.

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The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans, the Foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change. For more than 35 years, the Foundation has brought experience, commitment, and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those it serves. When it comes to helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, the Foundation expects to make a difference in your lifetime. For more information, visit www.rwjf.org.