BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD OF MICHIGAN AWARDS $600,000 TO WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR SCHOOL HEALTH

A new report released by the Trust for America's Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation says nearly 60 percent of Michigan residents could be obese by 2030 and health care costs could soar if the state doesn't start shedding pounds. The number of obese adults in Michigan expanded from 30.5 percent to 31.3 percent, making it the nation's fifth fattest state.

As part of its commitment of creating a healthier Michigan, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan (BCBSM) is awarding $600,000 to support healthy eating and physical activity programs in 20 elementary schools during the 2012-2013 school year.

The program will be implemented by Wayne State University's Center for School Health and to include programming developed by the Michigan Fitness Foundation. 2012 marks the fourth consecutive Building Healthy Communities program year, and introduces a new partnership with Wayne State University's Center for School Health and the Michigan Fitness Foundation (MFF).

"The Blues partnership with Wayne State University's Center for School Health and the Michigan Fitness Foundation is the cornerstone for building a stronger, broader coalition of organizations and supporters to reach a greater number of children across Michigan," said Shannon Carney Oleksyk, registered dietitian and healthy living advisor for the Blues' social mission. "We fully believe our collective efforts will have a positive impact on children's health."

The funding is part of the Blues' Building Healthy Communities: Engaging Elementary Schools Through Partnership, a comprehensive, school-wide program redesigned by the WSU Center for School Health to surround children and families with education and opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity. Other organizations supporting this program include: United Dairy Industry of Michigan, National Food Corps, Gopher Sports and BCBSM Foundation.

Nate McCaughtry, director of the WSU's Center for School Health, states: "We are very excited to join this partnership and the take the lead in promoting the health and well-being of so many of our children, many of whom reside in Michigan's most underserved communities."

Of the many Michigan elementary schools who applied to receive the program, twenty elementary schools, serving more than 10,000 students,
will receive healthy school transformation packages, including resources, equipment, professional development and mentoring. These transformation packages will help schools implement and sustain programming that addresses prevention of childhood obesity through a comprehensive, evidence-based, yet school-friendly, approach.

Obesity is the second leading cause of preventable death in the United States, and obese children are more likely to become obese adults with higher incidence of serious health conditions, including type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, sleep apnea, osteoarthritis and some cancers. Michigan’s annual obesity expenditures total nearly $3 billion, with 70 percent of medical expenses directly related to this epidemic.

Visit [www.coe.wayne.edu/centerforschoolhealth](http://www.coe.wayne.edu/centerforschoolhealth) for additional details about the Building Healthy Communities program.