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Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan awards $600,000 to implement healthy living programming in 20 Michigan elementary schools

Programming, developed in partnership with the Center for School Health at Wayne State University and the Michigan Fitness Foundation, to emphasize physical activity and healthy eating

DETROIT, September 26, 2012 — 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 Oleksy, 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.

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Dr. 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.*

Since 2009, Blue Cross has awarded nearly $2.7 million in *Building Healthy Communities* funding, impacting more than 35,000 elementary students. The grants are part of the Blues’ mission to promote healthier lifestyles, prevent childhood obesity, reduce associated health risks, improve the health status and ultimately reduce the cost of health care. Visit [bcbsm.com/buildhealth](http://bcbsm.com/buildhealth) or [www.coe.wayne.edu/centerforschoolhealth](http://www.coe.wayne.edu/centerforschoolhealth) for additional details about the Building Healthy Communities program.

**The following 20 schools have been selected to participate for the 2012-13 school year:**

**Southeast Michigan region schools:**

- **Macomb County**: Clinton Valley Elementary, 1260 Mulberry, Mt. Clemens
- **Macomb County**: Princeton Elementary, 20300 Statler, St. Clair Shores
- **Oakland County**: Brace-Lederle Global Technological Communications School, 18575 W. Nine Mile Road, Southfield
- **Oakland County**: Dr. Joseph F. Pollack Academic Center of Excellence, 23777 Southfield Road, Southfield
- **Wayne County**: Summit Academy North, 28697 Sibley, Romulus
- **Wayne County**: Voyageur Academy, 4321 N. Military, Detroit
- **Wayne County**: Universal Academy, 4612 Lonyo, Detroit
- **Wayne County**: Beech Elementary School, 19990 Beech-Daly Road, Redford
- **Wayne County**: Thomas Jefferson Elementary, 26555 Westfield Road, Redford
- **Wayne County**: Chandler Park Academy Elementary, 20200 Kelly Road, Harper Woods
- **Wayne County**: Star International Academy, 24425 Hass, Dearborn Heights
- **Wayne County**: West Village Academy, 3530 Westwood, Dearborn
Wayne County:
- Barth Elementary School, 38270 Barth Road, Romulus
- Gaudior Academy, 27100 Avondale, Inkster
- Universal Learning Academy, 28015 Joy Road, Westland
- Cleveland Elementary, 28030 Cathedral, Livonia

Southwest region schools:
- Berrien County: Countryside Academy Elementary, 4800 Meadowbrook Road, Benton Harbor
- Van Buren County: Lawrence Elementary School, 714 West St. Joseph Street, Lawrence

Saginaw, Flint and Lansing region schools:
- Isabella County: Morey Public School Academy: 418 West Blanchard Road, Shepherd

Northern and Upper Peninsula region schools:
- Lake County: Baldwin Elementary: 525 4th Street, Baldwin

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, a nonprofit organization, provides and administers health benefits to more than 4.4 million members residing in Michigan in addition to members of Michigan-headquartered groups who reside outside the state. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Care Network are nonprofit corporations and independent licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. For more company information, visit bcbsm.com.

Wayne State University is a premier urban research university offering 370 academic programs through 13 schools and colleges to nearly 29,000 students.

The Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness, Health and Sports and the Michigan Fitness Foundation envision a physically educated population with the knowledge and skills to enjoy a healthy, vigorous and safe lifestyle in communities designed to support physical activity. For more information, visit www.michiganfitness.org.

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