

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## ***Blue & You Foundation* awards more than \$1 million in grants to support health programs**

**LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (Nov. 15, 2004)** — The *Blue & You Foundation for a Healthier Arkansas* today announced its third annual grant awards to 21 recipients in an amount totaling \$1,357,453. The grant awards will be given in December for funding of 2005 programs that seek to improve the health of Arkansans.

Arkansas Blue Cross and Blue Shield established the *Blue & You Foundation* in December 2001 as a charitable foundation to promote better health in Arkansas. The *Blue & You Foundation* awards grants annually to non-profit or governmental organizations and programs that positively affect the health of Arkansans. Particular emphasis is given to projects affecting health-care delivery, health-care policy and health-care economics.

“Working together for better health is part of our mission at Arkansas Blue Cross and Blue Shield. By working with other organizations and agencies through the *Blue & You Foundation*, we believe we can have an even bigger impact on the health of Arkansans,” said Robert L. Shoptaw, chief executive officer of Arkansas Blue Cross and chairman of the foundation’s board of directors. “For the third year, we are supporting organizations and agencies who share this commitment to better health. And this year, we devoted a portion of grant funding to programs that effectively address maternal and child health issues, as well as childhood obesity.”

The *Blue & You Foundation* grants for 2005 also address several other health conditions and issues throughout Arkansas, including seat belt safety, hunger, nutrition and exercise education, worksite wellness, pharmacy assistance, legal and policy, and bilingual health education.

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*Blue & You Foundation* grants awarded for 2005 are:

**Arkansas Center for Birth Defects Research and Prevention** (\$85,341) — to support the Folic Acid Education Program in an effort to reduce the occurrence of folate-preventable birth defects in Arkansas. The program increases the knowledge and intake of folic acid among Arkansas women of childbearing age through public health education, postpartum patient education and recurrence prevention, and health-care provider education.

**Arkansas Children’s Hospital Foundation** (\$24,051) — to support the “Injury Free Coalition for Kids of Little Rock” child safety restraint program in an effort to reduce the morbidity and mortality of children ages 0-18 years due to preventable injuries. To address the leading cause of childhood injury in Arkansas, which is improper restraint during motor vehicle crashes, the program is creating culture-specific outreach activities and ensuring children with special needs who are discharged from Arkansas Children’s Hospital are properly restrained. The project plans to assess and fit 1,100 children into child passenger restraints appropriate for their age, physical condition and type of vehicle.

**Arkansas Educational Telecommunications Network Foundation** (\$70,522) — to underwrite the AETN “Fighting Fat” program, a monthly, hour-long program designed to help the public grasp the scope of the obesity epidemic and offer tips on how to change this disturbing trend. Each program in the series features three components: healthy living tips, fitness ideas, and a panel discussion by experts who address various health issues related to the topic. The program has the potential to reach more than 300,000 households in Arkansas.

**Arkansas Human Development Corporation (AHDC)** (\$73,304) — to support “Promotoras De Salud Project,” a program that uses community “health promoters” to address health concerns for Hispanics/Latinos. Promotoras De Salud provides bilingual and bi-cultural staff and volunteers in a seven-county region in Central Arkansas to furnish this population (individuals, small groups and community groups) with health and disease prevention information and education, specifically relating to early breast and cervical cancer, diabetes and hypertension detection. The AHDC also will teach the importance of prenatal care, reproductive health and childhood immunizations. Health promoters will steer the target population to health-care services, provide translation/interpretation services and some transportation assistance.

**Arkansas Rice Depot** (\$75,000) — to support “Food for Kids,” a special project that provides schools with new backpacks and nutritious foods. These backpacks are provided to students in homes where nutritious meals are often absent and the only meal they often receive is their school lunch. The backpacks contain “kid-friendly” foods that are simple or easy to prepare and can cover an evening meal for themselves and a  
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younger sibling until they can receive breakfast the next morning at school. The program, currently operating in 59 counties, has proven successful in reducing illness, absenteeism, and fighting and stealing, while enhancing attention spans, self-esteem and learning abilities. "Packs and Pouches," a spin-off program, will address maternal and child issues, promoting nutrition to the teen mom and producing a more healthy baby, and promoting graduation and self-esteem to the teen mom.

**BAPTIST HEALTH Foundation** (\$66,401) — to support the "Here's to Your Health: Childhood Obesity" program, which will target 600 or more preschool children as well as their parents who live in an 11-county area. The program will develop a new intervention for parents of children who are overweight or at-risk for becoming overweight; provide preventive care services including Body Mass Index (BMI) assessment, child obesity intervention, immunizations and child immunization intervention. In addition, the program plans to present training seminars for health-care professionals who work in the public and private sector to use the intervention with patients in their clinics or other health-care settings. The program will be executed through collaborations between the BAPTIST HEALTH Mobile Health Unit, After-Hours Pediatric Clinic and the Arkansas Department of Health.

**Community Clinic at St. Francis House** (\$94,673) — to support its "Prenatal Access Program," which targets low-income expectant mothers in Washington County. The Clinic and local medical community members plan to provide access to prenatal care to 900 indigent patients in Washington County in 2005. The goal is to improve health indicators for both the mother and child after delivery, reduce complications at birth due to lack of prenatal care, reduce costs to area hospitals due to conditions that are preventable with appropriate prenatal care and improve child health indicators through healthy life skills education and prenatal vitamins for mothers during pregnancy.

**Crittenden Memorial Hospital** (\$30,890) — to support its "Children's Health Initiative," which addresses maternal health, child health and childhood obesity in Crittenden County. The initiative is a collaboration with the Delta Area Health Education Center (AHEC) North Site and area school districts. Plans are to promote healthier eating habits by funding obesity curriculums for fifth-grade elementary students and seventh- through ninth-grade middle school students. A second goal is to promote healthy childhood development through support and educational opportunities for parents. The effort also will promote respiratory health among children through better prevention and education efforts.

**Crowley's Ridge Rural Health Coalition** (\$44,438) — to support "March into Fitness," a Greene County walking program. This 14-week community-based walking program encourages small behavioral changes to achieve long-term positive health

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outcomes. Participants will track their progress and report it to the CRHC office. Weekly educational classes will be available to participants as well as a host of tips and other support. Pre- and post-event health screenings as well as a brief survey will be administered to evaluate participants' success. The goal is to improve the quality of Greene County residents' lives and reduce death and disability associated with poor nutrition and lack of physical activity, and to serve as a model for other rural communities in the state.

**Daughters of Charity Services of Arkansas (DCS-ARK)** (\$48,158) — to support its pharmacy assistance program in Dumas that helps patients obtain low-cost or free medications and teaches them proper medication usage. Currently, more than 1,500 patients are being helped through various pharmaceutical companies' indigent drug programs with DCS-ARK's assistance in submitting applications. Patient education is offered by DCS-ARK to help teach them the proper way to administer medications, manage their health problems and minimize the number who neglect their prescriptions. The grant will help expand the reach of this program.

**Easter Seals of Arkansas (ESA)** (\$73,483) — to establish the Grand Prairie Child Health and Development Outreach Project, which will include a parent resource library and initiate a car-seat safety campaign. Through the outreach project, direct services, training and support will be provided to children with and without special needs and to their caregivers to enhance the health and development of young children in the Mississippi River Delta region. The ESA will provide screenings, therapy, consultations with caregivers, and referrals to services.

**Focus, Inc.** (\$10,000) — to support the 2005 Northeast Arkansas Health Education Conference in Jonesboro to improve community-based care delivery by training paraprofessionals on how to work with people with certain developmental disabilities, specifically retardation, cerebral palsy, seizure disorder and/or autism. A properly trained staff will help ensure that people with disabilities receive safer, more respectful and more competent services. In addition, lawmakers and state officials who attend gain a better understanding of the concerns and needs of disability workers.

**Greater Texarkana People's Clinic, Inc.** (\$50,000) — to provide free medical treatment, prevention and educational services to uninsured residents of Miller County, Arkansas, and Bowie County, Texas, and expand services to include monthly medical specialty clinics such as gynecology, dermatology, urology and internal medicine. The grant will fund a coordinator for the program.

**Kiwanis Activities, Inc.** (\$75,000) — to expand the "Physically Fit for Life" wellness program through the Joseph Pfeifer Kiwanis Camp for students in the Little Rock School District. The program has formalized an approach to teaching at-risk third-,

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fourth- and fifth-graders to live their lives more responsibly by understanding the importance and practice of nutrition, physical activity and fitness goal-setting. In addition to teaching students, the program will train, support and evaluate the faculty and staff at two elementary schools in Little Rock who will, in turn, maintain the program. The grant will allow the wellness program to expand, especially in the areas of fitness and adventure education.

**North Arkansas Partnership for Health Education** (\$112,418) — to support “North Arkansas Wellness Initiative” in Harrison, which targets risky lifestyle behaviors and health-related costs for the youth, residents and workforce in North Central Arkansas. The initiative is designed to promote health as a community value by improving the delivery of healthy lifestyle awareness, education and wellness/ intervention programs, and affecting policy change associated with obesity, tobacco usage and unhealthy lifestyle choices. The project also seeks to demonstrate a model workforce wellness program for city and county employees to help reduce utilization of health-care services.

**Pine Bluff Chapter of Links, Inc.** (\$39,200) — to support “Healthy Outcomes Promoted through Education (Plan H.O.P.E., Phase II),” a program to educate children, parents, educators and food-service providers in Pine Bluff area schools about proper pediatric nutrition, physical activity and healthy lifestyles. Plan H.O.P.E. consists of five specific initiatives: Body Walk, ORGAN WISE GUYS, Town Hall Meetings, exercise and fitness programs, and transportation programs. The program will be extended to all Jefferson County residents. The program provides a preventive health-care model and obesity clinics for children.

**Southeast Arkansas Education Service Cooperative** (\$117,633) — to support “Wellness Academics and You (WAY)” in Monticello. WAY integrates nutrition and physical education into the core subject areas: math, language arts, science and social studies so that it will be utilized by educators to enhance these subjects. Classes follow a 10-minutes exercise routine each day during class time, students keep a daily personal journal recording activities and food choices, and students reflect on their understanding of themselves (body, mind, family and social interactions). Students then explore content related to physical activity, nutrition, fitness, social interactions, health strategies, goal setting and critical thinking skill development. WAY includes the family and provides students with the knowledge and skills to make healthy lifestyle choices.

**St. Bernards Foundation** (\$68,739) — to support its “Kids Camp” to target childhood obesity. The two-week camp is designed for fourth- and fifth-grade students in the Jonesboro area who are overweight or at-risk-for-overweight and will provide a positive, stimulating atmosphere for youth while they build respect for themselves and

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others, improve their diet, and increase their physical activity. Physical assessments will be provided at the camp. Each day will encourage participation in social interaction, preparing healthy snacks while learning about nutrition, and leisure sports. A reunion will be scheduled several weeks after camp.

**University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS)/College of Public Health/University of Arkansas at Little Rock/W. Bowen School of Law** (\$30,000) — to support legal and policy issues related to obesity by holding a major symposium entitled “Legal and Policy Issues Related to Obesity: the Uses of Law to Address the Epidemic.” Individuals and panels of nationally known innovators in the field will present their ideas and discuss local and state ordinances and statutes, the role of schools, and possible litigation. Proceedings will be submitted to a law review and public health journal to increase impact and extend the effect of the symposium.

**UAMS/Delta Arkansas Health Education Center (AHEC)** (\$69,154) — to support “A Healthy Beginning,” a prenatal program that focuses its interventions on expectant mothers in Phillips County and their newborns to promote nutritional health, prevent childhood obesity, and to break an intergenerational cycle that promotes familial obesity. The program seeks to increase the nutritional knowledge of expectant mothers (and other family members) including the importance of physical activity and smoking abstinence; provide a three-month, 12-session comprehensive nutritional educational training for 75 expectant mothers on strategies to prevent childhood and family obesity; provide cooking classes for varying developmental stages; and educate parents, providing them with the skills they need to raise children who will be within the suggested BMI upon entering kindergarten.

**UAMS Department of Pediatrics/ KIDS FIRST** (\$99,048) — to support the statewide “Childhood Obesity: Impacting the Arkansas Epidemic” program, which is designed to improve kids’ health through early education and intervention. Based on the knowledge that obesity treatment is most successful when initiated in early childhood through an established multi-disciplinary approach, this program intervenes with pre-school and early elementary age children through increased awareness, early detection and prevention to provide long-term health improvements throughout life. Due to increased demand for education, the grant will focus on expansion of the curriculum and increased distribution.

“We have a health care crisis in Arkansas that must be addressed,” said Shoptaw. “The poor health status of our citizens ranks 47<sup>th</sup> in the nation and contributes to rising medical costs. By providing funding and working together with other organizations, we hope to establish or expand a number of diverse health care projects that will benefit all Arkansans over the long term.”

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The *Blue & You Foundation* received 105 grant applications (up from 77 applications in 2003) requesting more than \$8.3 million in support (up from \$6.9 million requested in 2003). The 2005 grant selections were made by the *Blue & You Foundation* board members, including: Carolyn Blakely, Ph.D., dean of the Honors College, University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff; Sybil J. Hampton, president, Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, Little Rock; Hayes C. McClerkin, Of Counsel, Dunn, Nutter and Morgan, Texarkana; Mahlon Maris, M.D., of Harrison; George K. Mitchell, M.D., of Little Rock; and Shoptaw.

The *Blue & You Foundation* will accept proposals for its 2006 funding cycle any time between Jan. 1 and July 15, 2005. Grants then will be reviewed and approved in the fall and awarded before the end of 2005 for 2006 programs. For more information or to receive a grant application, write to *Blue & You Foundation*, 601 S. Gaines Street, Little Rock, AR 72201 — or visit the foundation Web site at [www.BlueAndYouFoundationArkansas.org](http://www.BlueAndYouFoundationArkansas.org).

The foundation is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association and serves the state of Arkansas. The foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization.

Founded in 1948, Arkansas Blue Cross and Blue Shield, an Independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, is the largest health insurer in Arkansas. Arkansas Blue Cross and its affiliates have more than 2,400 employees and serve approximately one-third of Arkansans. If combined, the 41 independent, locally operated Blue Cross and Blue Shield Plans collectively provide health care coverage for 88.3 million people — nearly one-third of all Americans.