



**BlueCross BlueShield
of Florida**

An Independent Licensee of the
Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association

NEWS RELEASE

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Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida Recognized for Community Leadership

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. -- America's Health Insurance Plans (AHIP), the industry's top national trade association, recently selected Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida (BCBSF) as a finalist for the AHIP 2005 Community Leadership Award. According to AHIP, the award recognizes health insurance plans that have "demonstrated success in identifying and addressing a community need through innovation, creativity and purposeful leadership."

BCBSF's efforts to promote lasting solutions to ease the critical nursing shortage in Florida were commended. Known as *Generation RN_(sm)*, BCBSF's Nursing and Allied Health Signature Program has successfully increased public/private partnerships in nurse education as well as established endowments to provide scholarships to more than 200 nursing students each year in perpetuity. In recognition of Florida's cultural diversity, a major goal of the scholarship program is to attract students from ethnically diverse backgrounds.

Through strategic philanthropy the BCBSF initiative lays a foundation for sustained growth in nursing into the future, when Florida's growing elderly population is anticipated to increase the need for nurses. "Realizing the significant impact nurses have on the quality and availability of health care, BCBSF is focusing its philanthropic investments to generate more nurses," said Catherine Kelly, vice president for public affairs, BCBSF. "We are honored that these efforts have received recognition by our peers and hope to continue building cooperation among our colleagues in Florida to address the nursing shortage."

Currently, Florida is experiencing a critical shortage of nurses in hospital settings, one-in-eight RN positions remaining vacant. Workforce projections anticipate a continuing shortfall of nurses – an estimated 61,000 by the year 2020 – even as the demand for health care is expected to rise with an increasing and aging population.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida (BCBSF) is a leader in Florida's health industry. BCBSF and its subsidiaries serve more than 6.6 million Floridians. The company has been dedicated since 1944 to meeting the diverse needs of all those it serves by offering an array of choices. Headquartered in Jacksonville, Fla., BCBSF is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, an association of independent Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies. For more information concerning BCBSF, please see its Web site at www.bcbsfl.com.

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Members of the Awards' Board of Distinguished Judges & Advisors and their staffs selected Stevie winners from among the Finalists. Finalists were chosen by business professionals nationwide during preliminary judging in earlier this year. Stevie Awards were presented in more than 40 categories including Best Overall Company, Best Executive, and Best Corporate Social Responsibility Program. More than 1,500 entries from companies of all sizes and in virtually every industry were submitted for consideration. BCBSF beat out other finalists including Entergy Corporation, Honeywell International and Sun Microsystems.

About Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida is a leader in Florida's health industry. BCBSF and its subsidiaries serve more than 8.3 million people. Since 1944, the company has been dedicated to meeting the diverse needs of all those it serves by offering an array of choices. BCBSF is a not-for-profit, policyholder-owned, tax-paying mutual company. Headquartered in Jacksonville, Fla., BCBSF is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, an association of independent Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies. For more information concerning BCBSF, please see its Web site at www.bcbsfl.com.

About The Stevie Awards

Hailed as "the business world's own Oscars" by the New York Post (April 27, 2005), Stevie Awards are conferred in three programs: The American Business Awards, The International Business Awards, and The Stevie Awards for Women Entrepreneurs. Honoring companies of all types and sizes and the people behind them, the Stevies recognize outstanding performances in the workplace worldwide. Learn more about The Stevie Awards at www.stevieawards.com.

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