

The Blue Foundation

FOR A HEALTHY FLORIDA



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 26, 2003

Contact: Susan B. Towler, APR
(904) 905-6803/Cell (904) 655-2309
Susan.Towler@bcbsfl.com

Advocates for Uninsured Begin Statewide Strategy Discussions \$50,000 Grant Funds Statewide Policy Forums; First Forum in Orlando

Orlando – Advocates for the uninsured from across Florida will convene in Orlando today to begin the first of four statewide discussions on opportunities to shape state policy impacting access to health care, thanks to a grant from The Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida, Inc. The Blue Foundation awarded \$50,000 to Communities in Charge-Jacksonville to support four policy forums across Florida in partnership with other foundations.

The conference, titled "Covering Florida: Expanding Access to Health Care for the Low-Income Uninsured," will bring together approximately 75 community leaders and health care experts to share information and begin to examine the uninsured issue from a state perspective. In addition to The Blue Foundation, other sponsors include: Winter Park Health Foundation, Jessie Ball duPont Fund and Communities in Charge-Jacksonville through a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

"The growing numbers of uninsured pose a very real economic threat to Florida," said Dr. Rhonda Poirier, executive director of Communities in Charge-Jacksonville. "This is an issue that touches all sectors of our society. We are particularly grateful that these foundations have come together to support us as we explore opportunities for change."

It is estimated that 2.8 million non-elderly Florida residents do not have insurance. Studies show that the uninsured have a lower quality of life, have problems maintaining employment and do not seek preventive or timely treatment of chronic illness and disease. This results in higher costs for all Floridians.

-More-

The Blue Foundation
Add One
3/26/03

Communities in Charge-Jacksonville is one of 17 programs funded by a grant from The Blue Foundation as part of the Fall 2002 grant cycle. This past December, The Blue Foundation awarded \$785,962 total to a diverse group of organizations from the Panhandle to Miami-Dade supporting an array of health care needs throughout the state.

The Blue Foundation Executive Director Susan Towler said, "We are dedicated to making constructive contributions throughout the state to address the healthcare issues facing Floridians. This grant offers an opportunity for local leaders and national health care experts to convene and learn from one another to identify the best solutions for our state's uninsured crisis."

The Blue Foundation, the philanthropic affiliate of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida (BCBSF), provides grants to support programs that positively impact the health and well-being of uninsured and underserved Floridians. The Blue Foundation awards up to \$1 million in grants per year. The Blue Foundation is revising its application guidelines for the coming year. Grant applications for The Blue Foundation's Summer 2003 cycle are due March 31, 2003. For more information on the proposal process, please call 1-800-477-3736, ext. 63215.

The Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida, Inc. is a separate, philanthropic affiliate of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida incorporated in the state of Florida. The Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida, and its parent, BCBSF, are independent licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, an association of independent Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies. The Blue Foundation received its 501(c)(3) status by the Internal Revenue Service in May 2002. Since its inception in 2001, The Blue Foundation has granted \$2.2 million to 44 non-profits in Florida. For more information concerning The Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida, please visit its Web site at www.bluefoundationfl.org.

###