



**BlueCross BlueShield
of Florida**
An Independent Licensee of the
Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association

FACT

Florida Activist Champions Team

Member Newsletter

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Dear FACT members:

Given the recent, terrible events, all of our lives have changed inalterably. And our government's priorities have also changed significantly, as they should, focusing on issues of national and domestic security. However, this does not change the fact that health care is still a vital issue for the vast majority of Americans, and we hope that you will continue to join us in our efforts to ensure that hard-working, tax-paying Floridians have access to health care coverage that they can afford and meets their needs.

Thanks to your contributions to our grassroots efforts as a member of FACT, you have already made a decisive impact across the state of Florida, in Tallahassee, and in Washington, D.C., in the fight to preserve quality, affordable health care. It was amazing to all of us the way in which FACT came together like it did to play such a vital role in preserving health care coverage for millions of Floridians. And the credit for this success goes to you.

Since the beginning of the year, FACT members have been involved in a number of grassroots campaigns and activities. Small businesses and individual members participated in a range of activities to urge Florida state legislators not to pass legislation harmful to health care. One of the most significant aspects of the program was the recruitment of FACT members to submit letters to the editor to their local newspapers. Your letters have been published with remarkable regularity in newspapers across the state, attesting to the importance of health care issues to all Floridians, as well as to the impact of your personal stories about the need for comprehensive health care coverage that is flexible and affordable.

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“Dear FACT members”

Thank You!

FACT members also played key roles in several other grassroots campaigns. Seniors traveled to Washington, D.C., to urge their Members of Congress to preserve their Medicare choices, and FACT members in Boca Raton composed letters to the editor decrying a local hospital’s demands for excessive rate increases. What has been most striking about FACT members’ participation in all of these grassroots efforts is the tremendous degree of enthusiasm and determination that was exhibited in every single grassroots communication. Truly, FACT has emerged as a force to be reckoned with in the health care debate.

FACT members have worked so hard this year, and this newsletter celebrates your success, gives you a chance to get to know each other better, and lets you know what Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida is doing to improve your health care and make a positive impact on the community. We hope you enjoy it, and we thank you again for your hard work and dedication.

Sincerely,



Todd Benjamin
Program Manager



◀ **FACT** members joined senior citizens from across the country in Washington, D.C., to urge their Members of Congress to preserve Medicare choices. Here, Representative Greenwood talks to the group.



Getting Real With

Jim H. Hodges, Jr.

Jim Hodges, Jr., and his wife of 35 years, Sharon, have been helping out with the family business, Jim H. Hodges Realty in Panama City Beach, for the past year and a half, selling condominiums and other residential properties in the Baypoint area. Jim's father, Jim H. Hodges, Sr., started the business 19 years ago, and currently Mr. Hodges' sister, uncle, wife and son all work for the Realty.

Jim Hodges is in a unique position with his family-run business. Not only does it make good business sense to provide his employees with health care coverage, but those employees are also members of his family. With health care issues at the forefront of every state and federal legislative debate, Mr. Hodges became a grassroots advocate to provide for his family, and also because, as he says, "You're getting your wishes and your voices out

there where they [elected officials] hear you. Whether they act upon it, you're never sure, but at least you know that they're now aware what people that are in business for themselves and having to pay for their own insurance are thinking about."

Mr. Hodges was able to make his voice heard in a big way. As a grassroots advocate for **FACT**, Mr. Hodges gave an interview that was distributed to local radio stations. One station, WYOO, was so impressed by Mr. Hodges' comments that they invited him onto their morning drive-time radio show, "What's Up, Doc?" Mr. Hodges was able to talk about the unique struggles of small businesses as they protect their ability to provide their employees with health care coverage and fight government interference and frivolous lawsuits by trial lawyers.

Getting Real With

Jim H. Hodges, Jr.

Mr. Hodges knows all about the trials and tribulations of the business world, both big and small. For 16 years he was a vice president for a major service contract firm in the Tampa/Clearwater area and, with a seemingly secure job in the large corporate world, life seemed good for Jim and Sharon and their two sons, Jim III and Scott. Sharon decided to get into real estate, and Jim dabbled in it himself “on a part-time basis to help her out.”

But then his company was bought out. Rather than going through the whole corporate restructuring ringer, Mr. Hodges decided to dive full-time into real estate with his wife. Things were still going well, but two years later came some sobering news from Panama City. Jim H. Hodges, Sr., had suffered his third heart attack. Jim and Sharon talked it over, and they knew what they had to do. It was time to return to Panama City to help keep the family business alive. With their newly acquired real estate expertise, they were both in a great position to make this next step. And today, both Jim Sr. and Jim H. Hodges Realty are still thriving.

One of the major transitions for Jim in the move from corporate America to the small-business world was the issue of health care coverage. In his previous job, he never had to worry about health care. As Jim relates, in the corporate world, “You had pretty much all of your family insurance taken care of by the major companies you worked for, including your dental programs, and we had cancer policies. You didn’t think much about them at the time.” But now Jim had the responsibility of providing health care coverage so that his employees/family members wouldn’t have to worry. That was one of the reasons why he became a grassroots advocate and eventually a member of **FACT**, as well as a part-time radio personality.

One of the most satisfying aspects of the radio experience for Jim was that he was able to reach out to a wide audience. He noted that many of the radio personnel were much younger, but his goal was to reach out to younger people and Baby Boomers alike. “It [the radio show] gives you a chance to get out on the air and get your views across to the general public and make them go the ol’ tongue-in-cheek, ‘Hmmm,’ so they can think about, ‘Well, maybe he’s right,’ or, ‘I never thought about this,’ or ‘I never thought about that.’ And it’s generally waking up people.”

For now Jim is taking it easy—or as easy as he can with a business to run. With Sharon and Jim III at his side, he is working hard and taking the few opportunities that come his way to engage in his favorite pastimes: golfing and fishing. Maybe he’ll take some time out to visit Scott who is, according to Jim, a “computer whiz kid in Jackson, Mississippi.” He doesn’t want to admit it, but making sure his family and business are safe through his grassroots activities does give him a bit of a warm, fuzzy feeling inside.



CHARITABLE GIVING

At Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida, we take great pride in helping our members lead healthy, confident lives. We also believe strongly in dedicating time and resources to charitable causes. This commitment to caring solutions for Floridians is just one reason why Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida (BCBSF) created a new philanthropic foundation, The Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida, Inc., in 2001.

We believe in giving back to our communities. The Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida is a separate philanthropic affiliate that will help us reach beyond our day-to-day mission and focus solely on making contributions to charitable organizations that promote better health in Florida. BCBSF has dedicated \$5 million to create a separate, charitable foundation to support our corporate vision of providing caring solutions and affordable health care choices to Floridians.

OUR MISSION

The mission of The Blue Foundation is to be able to provide crucial aid to charitable organizations and programs that positively impact the health and well-being of uninsured and underserved Floridians. Awarding up to \$1 million in grants annually, the foundation will also support health care education, awareness and training programs, public policy research, and workforce preparation initiatives.

“BCBSF believes strongly in the value of corporate citizenship and charitable giving. Through The Blue Foundation, we will be able to reach beyond our current community programs and focus on expanding our charitable giving in the communities where we live and work,” said Bruce N. Bagni, BCBSF Senior Vice President and General Counsel, and new president of the foundation’s board of directors.

“Our mission is designed to be broad enough to have a significant impact on the many different health care challenges in Florida,” Bagni continued, “The foundation will accomplish its mission through a combination of grants and support for demonstration projects, research and policy initiatives, rather than directly financing the provision of health care services.”

HOW THE FOUNDATION WORKS

The Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida will accept proposals for its first grants in August and September, with awards being announced

in October. After this initial grant cycle, the foundation plans on awarding grants twice a year in April and October. The foundation grants will be in addition to BCBSF’s current community relations and employee volunteer programs. “Last year, BCBSF and its employees invested more than \$3 million through charitable contributions, and our employees donated thousands of hours in service to help the needy across Florida,” Bagni said. “We are committed to continuing our good works and being a model corporate citizen.”

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Some of the health programs and services that will be the focus of the Blue Foundation’s charitable giving include:

- Education on prescription drug subsidy programs;
- Teen non-smoking programs;
- HIV/AIDS education and research;
- Community health clinics;
- Education on health care coverage options for uninsured children;
- Substance abuse recovery programs (drugs, tobacco, alcohol);
- Mobile Health Services (mammography, immunizations, screenings);
- Improving care and support for people with chronic physical and mental health conditions;
- Health promotion and education to improve health status;
- Prevention and wellness programs;
- Youth development and elderly programs.

Requests will generally be considered for grants of all sizes from \$5,000 up to \$150,000 annually. Multi-year commitments may be made, depending upon the request and the need.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

The Blue Foundation will not actively engage in additional fundraising during the first year. However, the long-term goal is to accept donations from other sources (such as customers, corporations, and other foundations) that would increase the endowment balance. If an organization is interested in contributing to the foundation, please contact the foundation office at 800-477-3736, x63215.

SUCCESS



STORIES

This year, **FACT** members’ voices were heard by Floridians across the state as they submitted letters to the editor to their local newspapers, providing personal testimonials about the need for comprehensive, flexible health care, as well as the importance of opposing legislation that jeopardized quality, affordable health care coverage. Here are a few powerful quotes from some of the letters to the editor that were published in local newspapers around the state:

THE GULF BREEZE SENTINEL:

“With all of the recent talk of health care reform and changing the way health coverage is provided, I want to voice my opinion on the subject. I have had nothing but positive experiences with HMOs my family and I have been involved with. I owe my life to God most of all, but my doctors and health care coverage sure didn’t hurt either.”

THE CITRUS COUNTY CHRONICLE:

“I am 89 years old and my wife is 79. You can probably guess that we are on a fixed income. Any government-mandated change in our health care plan, which we receive through Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida, could make it more difficult for us to afford the medications that we rely on—in our case, high blood pressure and insulin for diabetes.”

THE (NEW SMYRNA BEACH) OBSERVER:

“I’m 64, and no spring chicken... Whenever something happens, the

doctors in our network are there to meet our needs with quality coverage. In particular, Dr. Schmid has always been there for us. He is easy to talk with, down to earth and does not hesitate to refer us to a specialist when needed.”

OKEECHOBEE NEWS:

“I want all of Florida’s elected officials to see that nowadays this kind of health care is hard to come by. I have already sent a letter to my Representative, Tom Feeney, to tell him what I think is important: affordable health care that gives us choices, not more government regulations and backroom deals with lawyers.”

CAPE CORAL DAILY BREEZE:

“My wife, Dorothy, and I have been members of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida for 25 years...A year ago, I underwent surgery to replace my knee, and I was in

the hospital for four days. The orthopedic surgeon who performed my surgery, Dr. George Markovich, is a specialist in the field. I received excellent treatment, and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida covered all the costs.”

SAINT AUGUSTINE RECORD:

“My husband and I own Flow-Technology, an industrial distributor of fittings and valves in the Jacksonville area. We are a small business of 10 employees, and this has allowed us to be very family-oriented... I would have to inform my employees that due to poor decision-making by the government, we could no longer provide them with health coverage.”

FACT

Florida Activist Champions Team
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APPROVED

AS IS _____

WITH CHANGES _____

BY _____

DATE _____

[name]
[address]
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