



The Blue Foundation

FOR A HEALTHY FLORIDA



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## **NEWS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **The Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida Announces \$8 Million Initiative to Address Childhood Obesity**

**JACKSONVILLE, Fla.** – The rate of childhood obesity in America has more than tripled since 1980<sup>1</sup>, and, in Florida, 32.5 percent of children ages 10 to 17 are overweight or obese<sup>2</sup>. Compelled by the serious and widespread threat of the obesity epidemic for children, families, communities and the health care system, The Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida, the philanthropic affiliate of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida (BCBSF), today announced a statewide initiative called Embrace a Healthy Florida.

The \$8 million, four-year strategic effort will address the causes of childhood obesity through public-private partnerships. Embrace a Healthy Florida was announced during a convening of Jacksonville community nonprofit, nongovernmental agencies, governmental agencies, and leaders who are currently engaged in activities that address childhood obesity.

“We are taking action beyond traditional nutrition and fitness programs,” said Susan Towler, executive director of The Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida. “Through strategic philanthropy, Embrace a Healthy Florida will foster environments that promote healthy lifestyles for children.”

The statewide initiative will support community-based programs that promote change in families and parenting, childcare centers and schools, neighborhood recreation opportunities and other influences on the accessibility of healthy food and physical activity. Focusing on Jacksonville, Miami, Orlando, Tampa and Tallahassee regions, the three-phase effort will provide grants to nonprofit organizations, fund research, and foster community collaboration.

Along with numerous physical health risks, overweight and obese children are shown to suffer higher rates of depression, greater difficulty in peer relationships and poorer quality of life than their normal weight counterparts<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Sorter, A (2006). A Weighty Issue: Childhood Obesity. Retrieved April 30, 2008, from Florida Medical Center Web site: <http://floridamedicalctr.staywellsolutionsonline.com/RelatedItems/1,2233>.

<sup>2</sup> National Initiative for Children's Healthcare Quality.

<sup>3</sup> Action for Healthy Kids, The Learning Connection: The Value of Improving Nutrition and Physical Activity in Our Schools, 2004 ([www.ActionForHealthyKids.org](http://www.ActionForHealthyKids.org) [July 7, 2005]).

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"Instead of several segmented strategies, Embrace a Healthy Florida brings together resources from numerous factions," said Towler. "This enables the initiative to become one unified effort working together to combat childhood obesity."

The Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida is a nonprofit, private foundation established by BCBSF in 2001. Through strategic philanthropy, The Blue Foundation supports community-based solutions that enhance access to quality health-related services for Floridians, particularly the uninsured and underserved.

The Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida is a separate, philanthropic affiliate of BCBSF 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. For more information on The Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida, please visit its Web site at [www.bluefoundationfl.com](http://www.bluefoundationfl.com).

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