



NEWS RELEASE

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The Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida Grants \$123,672 To Diabetes Coalition of St. Lucie County for Minority Education

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – The Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida, Inc., today awarded \$123,672 over two years to the Diabetes Coalition of St. Lucie County, Inc., to establish a diabetes education program targeting African Americans. The project will train lay outreach workers to deliver health information about prevention, screening, early detection, self-management and follow-up care for diabetes.

The coalition expects to increase minority participation in health prevention activities, provide greater access to health education and improve the level of diabetes management. The incidence of diabetes among African Americans is higher than average in St. Lucie County. More alarming is that the county's African Americans who have diabetes experience a death rate 33 percent higher than that for Caucasians. The lay health promoters, based in hair and nail salons and churches, will collect information, monitor behavior of people with or at risk of having diabetes and recommend pursuit of treatment when appropriate.

"We're committed to building a healthy Florida," said Susan Towler, executive director of The Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida. "Diabetes can be managed, and its effects on the individual's health can be minimized. However, as indicated by the high death rate of African Americans with diabetes in St. Lucie County, when diabetes is ignored, it can be deadly."

In all, The Blue Foundation awarded \$925,000 to 16 non-profit organizations throughout Florida in its first grant offerings. 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.

"These inaugural grants represent the significant positive impact that The Blue Foundation is having on the many health care challenges we face in Florida," said Towler. "With the support of BCBSF, we are accomplishing our goal of providing caring solutions through grants that will educate, train and improve the lives of individuals and families throughout Florida."

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The 16 programs that The Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida is funding are rich in diversity, from educating older adults about prescription drugs, to training physicians on women's heart disease symptoms, to improving the lives of adolescents with diabetes. The other organizations receiving the first grants are, by geographic area:

- Florida Academy of Family Physicians, statewide, \$24,000;
- Sacred Heart Health System, Pensacola, \$118,938;
- Florida State University School of Nursing, Tallahassee, \$37,000;
- Baker County Council on Aging, Macclenny, \$32,076;
- MaliVai Washington Kids Foundation, Jacksonville, \$16,261;
- Hope Haven Children's Clinic and Family Center, Jacksonville, \$17,255;
- Community Asthma Partnership, Jacksonville; \$25,000;
- University of Florida Department of Surgery Trauma/Critical Care, Jacksonville, \$26,550;
- Cardiovascular Center at Shands Jacksonville, \$100,000;
- Seniors First Inc., Orlando, \$50,060;
- PACE Center for Girls of Pinellas County, \$81,000;
- Gulf Coast Community Care, Tampa Bay, \$67,110;
- Education Foundation of Sarasota County Inc., Sarasota, \$5,000;
- Family Central Inc., Fort Lauderdale, \$138,577;
- University of Miami School of Medicine Diabetes Research Institute, Miami, \$62,501.

"Almost 200 organizations applied for grant funding totaling \$24 million in requests," Towler said. "We were pleased that there was so much interest in our goal to improve the health and well-being of uninsured and underserved Floridians." Following an initial review of all proposals, a team of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida employees made recommendations to The Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida board of directors, which approved the final grant offerings.

Towler said The Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida plans to distribute up to \$1 million in grants each year. Beginning in 2002, grants will be distributed twice a year in the spring and in the fall. The next request for proposals deadline is March 8, 2002. For information on how to apply for a grant from The Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida, contact the foundation office at (800) 477-3736, extension 63215.

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The Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida 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. For more information concerning The Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida, please visit its website at www.bcbsfl.com.