



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contacts:** Gena Arthur    Mark Ezzell  
BCBSNC                    HWTFC  
919-765-2916    919-733-4022

**April 7, 2004**

## **N.C. Health & Wellness Trust Fund Commission and BCBSNC Launch Fit Together, a \$4.5 million statewide healthy lifestyle initiative**

**Raleigh, N.C.** – Today the N.C. Health & Wellness Trust Fund Commission (HWTFC) and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina (BCBSNC) launched **Fit Together**, a long-term, comprehensive statewide overweight and obesity prevention initiative uniting \$4.5 million in public and private resources.

Lt. Gov. Beverly Perdue, Chairperson, HWTFC, and Bob Greczyn, President and CEO of BCBSNC, announced the groundbreaking, three-year initiative at a news conference at the Central YMCA in downtown Raleigh.

The three-year initiative will include a public education campaign, consisting of advertising and other communications to the public and a Web site. It will also highlight successful community programs through a clearinghouse and awards program. The media campaign and other program initiatives will begin this year. BCBSNC and the Health & Wellness Trust Fund are jointly implementing and funding the initiative.

The Centers for Disease Control recently reported that 27 percent of North Carolina's high school students are overweight or at risk of becoming overweight and more than half of North Carolina adults are overweight or obese. This alarming statistic underscores the importance of this three-year campaign designed to change health behaviors in the state. Fit Together will develop and disseminate targeted messages to encourage increased physical activity and healthy eating and promote effective community-based activities and proven approaches.

Fit Together is also aimed at educating individuals that being "fit" doesn't necessarily mean going to the gym everyday. It means being active through activities such as walking the dog, gardening, pushing your child in a baby stroller, mowing the lawn or playing outside.

"Many North Carolina communities recognize the importance of obesity prevention, and so there are model projects across the state that we all can learn and benefit from," said Perdue. "Our partnership will make North Carolinians aware of community activities and best practices from Murphy to Manteo. From there, it's about making healthy choices. And healthy choices result from having the right information."

A study published in the March 10, 2004 issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association concludes that poor diet and physical inactivity are poised to overtake tobacco as the leading cause of death. Obesity and being overweight have been described as an epidemic that could literally wipe out other improvements in health and safety\*. It's a serious issue that cities, towns and states like North Carolina are addressing.

(more)



An independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association ©Registered Mark of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association



## **Fit Together Announcement, Page 2**

“All across the country, communities are trying new ways to deal with obesity issues and finding out what works. What’s been missing is a way to gather these findings in a single, easily accessible place,” said Greczyn. “With our partners at the North Carolina Health and Wellness Trust Fund Commission, we’re creating a clearinghouse for helpful programs and services, educating North Carolinians through a television awareness campaign and recognizing best practices through an awards program.”

Detailed plans for the Fit Together Web site, awards program and television campaign will be completed and announced in the coming months. Fit Together is a \$4.5 million combined commitment over three years by the HWTFC and BCBSNC. HWTFC has already invested more than \$8 million in community grants and other initiatives to prevent overweight/obesity in North Carolina.

### **About Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina**

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina is a leader in delivering innovative health care products, services and information to approximately 3 million members, including approximately 500,000 served on behalf of other Blue plans. The company offers its members the Blue Extras<sup>SM</sup> value-added programs, which provide discounts and information on a wide variety of health-related services at no additional cost. BCBSNC also offers life, dental, long-term care and disability insurance products. For 70 years, the company has served its customers by offering access to quality health care at a competitive price and has served the people of North Carolina through support of community organizations, programs and events that promote good health. BCBSNC’s HMO and POS products have earned Excellent Accreditation from the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA), an independent, not-for-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of health care delivered to people everywhere. BCBSNC also has North Carolina’s first and only NCQA accredited PPO plan – Blue Options<sup>SM</sup>. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. Access BCBSNC online at [www.bcbsnc.com](http://www.bcbsnc.com).

### **[About N.C. Health & Wellness Trust Fund Commission](#)**

The Health & Wellness Trust Fund Commission makes North Carolina stronger, both physically and economically, by funding programs that promote preventive health. Created by the General Assembly in 2000 to allocate a portion of North Carolina's share of the national tobacco settlement, HWTFC has invested \$43 million to support preventive health initiatives and \$90 million to fund a prescription drug assistance program. For more information on how preventive health is good for our lives and good for our wallets, please visit [www.hwtfc.org](http://www.hwtfc.org).

\*March 24 *USA Today* report on Duke University obesity study.

#-#-#



An independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association ©Registered Mark of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association