



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Top Towns to Receive Fit Community Awards and Grants
Leading N.C. cities and towns promoting healthy lifestyles receive recognition and funding

RALEIGH, N.C. – The ballots are in and eight North Carolina communities will be the first in the state to be recognized as a Fit Community. Nearly 50 cities and towns applied to be designated as a Fit Community, which is an initiative to reward communities that improve health for their residents by actively promoting physical activity, healthy eating and youth tobacco use prevention.

Two related grant programs will announce awards totaling more than one million dollars at the event as well. First, North Carolina non-profit organizations were eligible to apply for grants totaling nearly \$60,000 over the next two years from the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF). The purpose of HWTF’s Fit Community grants is to implement local projects that support community infrastructure and healthy living policies pertaining to physical activity and nutrition.

Second, the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation’s (BCBSNC Foundation) Fit Together Grant Program will award up to \$40,000 per year for three years to five nonprofit or governmental organizations. The Fit Together grant program rewards nonprofit organizations and government agencies that form innovative partnerships that improve access and remove barriers to physical activity in rural counties.

Fit Together is an overweight and obesity prevention initiative of the HWTF and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina (BCBSNC).

WHO: HWTF Chair Lt. Gov. Bev Perdue, BCBSNC CEO Bob Greczyn, BCBSNC Foundation President Kathy Higgins, public officials and Fit Community mayors and representatives.

WHAT: Fit Community award presentation and grant announcement.

WHEN: **Wednesday, May 10, 2006**
11 a.m. to noon

WHERE: **Exploris Museum’s Zanzibar Room**
201 East Hargett Street in downtown Raleigh

WHY: Obesity has emerged as a major threat to children and adults across the United States, especially here in North Carolina. According to the Centers for Disease Control, 61 percent of North Carolina adults are overweight or obese, and 25 percent reported no exercise in the prior 30 days. Fit Together’s mission is to support programs and initiatives that address this growing problem.
For more information, visit www.FitTogetherNC.org.

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 more than 3.2 million members, including approximately 620,000 served on behalf of other Blue plans. For 72 years, the company has served its customers by offering health insurance at a competitive price and has served the people of North Carolina through support of community organizations, programs and events that promote good health. 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.

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About Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation

The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation provides financial support to improve the health and well-being of North Carolinians. This mission is achieved through programs and services funded in response to grant requests, as well as through funding for programs supporting needs identified by the Foundation. The Foundation's primary focus areas include increasing access to health care for the uninsured and underinsured, minimizing or eliminating racial and ethnic health disparities, promoting physical activity, and providing screenings and health education (related to cardiac care, diabetes, obesity, and women's health). Since its inception in November 2000, the BCBSNC Foundation has awarded nearly \$27 million in grants to organizations throughout the state. In addition to its grant program, the Foundation supports several signature programs. These programs include Be Active KidsSM, an award-winning program that teaches preschool children about nutrition and physical activity; and Healthy Community Institutes for Non-Profit Excellence, two-day intensive training sessions offered free of charge to all North Carolina nonprofits. Additional information about the Foundation's signature programs and grant requirements, as well as a list of all grants awarded can be found on our Web site at www.bcbsnc.com/foundation.

About NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund

The NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund 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, HWTF has invested \$127 million to support preventive health initiatives and \$78 million to fund a prescription drug assistance program for seniors. For more information, please visit www.HealthWellNC.com.

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