



**BlueCross BlueShield  
of Nebraska**

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# NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Health Insurer Expands Grant Program for Greater Nebraska Communities** *In 2<sup>nd</sup> year, \$100,000 will support health and wellness programs*

February 11, 2009 (Omaha, NE) -- Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska is pleased to announce the 2009 **Blue Health Advantage Wellness Grants**. The program was launched in 2008 to support health and wellness programs across the state, especially in Greater Nebraska. In 2009, the BHA Wellness Grants will provide a total of **\$100,000** to be shared by as many as ten different non-profit organizations. The grants, of up to \$20,000 each, will be awarded this summer to those projects which show the greatest promise for bettering the health and well-being of community residents outside of the Omaha/Lincoln metropolitan areas.

A new and stunning report from the Center for Rural Affairs in Lyons, Nebraska demonstrates the challenges facing rural Nebraska. Before 1980, rural Americans were generally more fit than their urban counterparts. Now, that has changed, with the rural residents with higher obesity rates<sup>1</sup>. The Center recommends the creation of community-based nutrition and exercise programs to address the issue. Says Joe Bailey of the Center for Rural Affairs: "We applaud Blue Cross for making this commitment to wellness in Greater Nebraska. We know it can make a difference."

In the first year of the program, Blue Cross received more than sixty excellent proposals. Of those, nine stood out for their innovation, community focus, and potential impact. Among the winners: the "Fit Farmers" program in Holdrege, walking trails designed for all ages in Chadron, and two school-based programs focused on preventing childhood obesity. Over the summer, a Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska team traveled to each community to award the checks, as well as to draw attention to the excellent work being done to improve the health of Nebraskans. A similar media tour is planned for the 2009 winners.

Proposals for the 2009 grants are currently being accepted. Those applications must be received at Blue Cross and Blue Shield no later than April 1, 2009. The complete Request for Proposal (RFP) and full application details can be found under "Features" or "Who We Are-Community Relations" at [www.bcbsne.com](http://www.bcbsne.com). For a hard-copy of the RFP, please contact Carol Vidlak at [carol.vidlak@bcbsne.com](mailto:carol.vidlak@bcbsne.com) or (402) 398-3734.

*Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska, an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, insures or provides benefit administration to nearly 700,000 people. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska is a mutual insurance company committed to delivering the health and wellness solutions that people value most. Among recent honors: The 2008 Integrity Award from the Better Business Bureau, the Platinum Well Workplace Award from the Wellness Councils of America in 2007, and one of the Best Places to Work in Omaha in 2008.*

<sup>1</sup>"Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity in Rural America"; January 2009; Center for Rural Affairs, Lyons, NE

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