



## Building a Healthy Mississippi

Summer 2013

### Changing Health, Changing Lives, Changing Mississippi!

With the increasing demand for health and wellness solutions in our state, the Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation is working to meet challenges and create opportunities to improve the health of Mississippians. And now, we are proud to report on that work through our new quarterly newsletter.

A healthy Mississippi is a place where health and wellness is the foundation for our schools, communities, colleges and universities, and our entire culture. It's a place where healthy, active kids learn the importance of good health and lifestyle habits at school each day, and take those lessons home with them. It's communities of active residents exercising in parks and enjoying healthy produce from the local community gardens or a farmers' market. It's a place where our state's colleges and universities have a focus on health and wellness that helps change the surrounding communities and schools. This is the vision of the Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation.

There are many wonderful things happening with the Foundation:

- Since 2005, the Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation has funded health and fitness programs in 188 schools and 56 counties, impacting at least a quarter of a million Mississippi school children.
- Through other Foundation support, another 15,000 students have had an opportunity to improve their health and learn lessons about healthy eating.
- Many thousands of other Mississippians have been impacted by the Foundation's efforts as a result of support of universities and colleges and community-based efforts.



- Through the Healthy Hometown program established by the Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation, communities are becoming more focused on healthy lifestyles.

Everything we do is centered on a healthy Mississippi and helping Mississippians take ownership of their health. Mississippi continues to make progress toward a healthier future, and the Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation is facilitating this progress by providing the resources, funding, and leadership needed to continue in our commitment to a healthy Mississippi.

# Mississippi Physical Education Teachers Recognized as 2012 All Star Teachers of the Year

Lawhon Elementary School P.E. teacher Terry Leigh Clayton of Tupelo and Columbia Elementary P.E. teacher Jay Rayborn of Columbia were recognized by the Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation as 2012 All Star Teachers of the Year. Clayton and Rayborn were recognized for their spirit, energy, dedication, and commitment to providing a positive and engaging experience for students in their P.E. classes, which utilize the Project Fit America equipment and curriculum funded by the Foundation.

Lawhon Elementary students, staff, school district officials, and members of the Tupelo Healthy Hometown Committee watched proudly as the Foundation presented Terry Leigh Clayton with the

2012 All Star Teacher of the Year Award. Clayton was astonished by the announcement and even more surprised to see her husband and two kids join her as she received her award. The energy among the students was one of great school spirit and pride.

Terry Leigh Clayton expects nothing but the best from her students, and she motivates them to challenge themselves and enjoy being active. As a result, it is not a surprise that recently, students voted P.E. as their favorite time at school. Clayton expressed her teaching philosophy to Project Fit America in just one statement, "I want my students to be ACTIVE!" She wants them to feel as though they can achieve success in P.E. regardless of ability, weight, or any other challenge they may have. "My students see me get fired up about fitness, and they, in turn, are getting fired up, too," Clayton said. "I believe the more I learn and grow the more they will, too."

"No excuses" is what keeps Jay Rayborn's students moving at Columbia Elementary School. With no gymnasium and very limited inside space, Rayborn has still managed to create a fun and exciting P.E. program. School district officials, staff, and students celebrated in grand movie style with a video honoring the work of Coach Rayborn. Students and staff demonstrated indoor equipment while the school chorus sang their remixed version of, "Jay likes to move it, move it!" Rayborn's wife and parents were among the crowd of supporters as the Foundation presented his 2012 All Star Teacher of the Year Award. "I love games that have ALL students moving with a purpose at once," Rayborn said to Project Fit America. His principal Wendy Bracey offered her support of Rayborn, stating to Project Fit America, "His ability to connect with the students and

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Photo provided by the Tupelo Public School District.



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Photo provided by Project Fit America.



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Photo provided by Project Fit America.

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teach simple concepts as well as advanced topics, is truly superior." Rayborn believes in modeling the behaviors he teaches his students, and he praises his students for their great efforts.

The Foundation also presented each school's P.E. program with a \$1,000 grant in honor of these P.E. teachers' accomplishments. Teachers are nominated for the award based on recommendations from in-service reports from

field trainers. Key factors for consideration of the award include the teacher's enthusiasm and commitment to program philosophies, which is evidenced in broad-based fitness programming, outstanding creativity in the health and fitness program usage, strong and consistent utilization of Core Manual lessons from the Project Fit America program, and exceptional dedication to students, among other factors.

## Girl Scouts Learning to Live Healthy, Lead Healthy

In 2012, the Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation awarded the Girl Scouts of Greater Mississippi a grant to establish a comprehensive healthy living initiative targeted specifically to girls ages five to 18.

The *Live Healthy, Lead Healthy* initiative also provides training for adults and is hosting 30 health and fitness events around the state along with 10 fun run/walks. The events are designed to reflect the current season's activities and cater to people of all ages. They've also begun the "Get Movin' Girls" Health Clubs designed for mothers and daughters, so they can have fun and be active together.

Since the program began last summer, nearly 5,000 girls and 500 adult volunteers have taken part and are providing self-reported data including BMI, physical activity, and eating habits. The goal is to encourage healthy habits, including increased physical activity and healthy food choices.

"We're finding the kids are reporting even more physical activity than the adults, and are encouraging other friends and family members to develop those healthy habits," said Lissa Frank, Chief Operating Officer, Girl Scouts of



Greater Mississippi. "They are all excited, and this grant has given us the opportunity to focus on health and fitness and engage other community partners."

"The Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation is continuing to support health and wellness initiatives that improve the health of Mississippians in every area of our state," said Sheila Grogan, Executive Director. "We applaud the efforts of the Girl Scouts of Greater Mississippi as they focus on healthy lifestyles for thousands of Girl Scouts and their families, as well as volunteers."



# The Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation is Searching for Mississippi's Healthiest Hometown

The Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation established the Healthy Hometown Award to encourage and reward exemplary community health and wellness. The Foundation exists to improve the health of Mississippi, and this award assists our municipal leaders in their efforts to make their communities – and ultimately our state – a healthier place to live.

The Foundation is pleased to partner with the Mississippi Municipal League to promote community health and wellness through the

Healthy Hometown Awards. At the 2013 Mississippi Municipal League Annual Conference in July, up to three municipalities will receive recognition of their efforts and success in being healthy communities. One municipality will be recognized as Mississippi's "Healthiest Hometown."

For more information on the Healthy Hometown awards, visit the Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation website at [www.healthiermississippi.org](http://www.healthiermississippi.org).



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