



Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation

A Subsidiary of Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi.

News

Building a **Healthy** Mississippi

Spring 2014

Helping Hands Garden Springing Up in a New Location

Madison Countians Allied Against Poverty (MadCAAP) is dedicated to teaching and inspiring Madison County residents to make better lives for themselves. Since 1985, MadCAAP has helped alleviate the devastating effects of poverty by servicing clients through their clothes closet, home repair and new home construction program, emergency assistance program and food pantry.

The goal of the "Save our Garden" project is to relocate the Helping Hands garden and to provide new educational classes that will teach residents about healthy eating and nutrition. MadCAAP has provided fresh vegetables to families in Madison County since 2010. Through support from the Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation, MadCAAP will continue to provide clients in Madison County with nutritious, fresh vegetables.

MadCAAP has consistently harvested an average of 13,000 pounds of fresh vegetables, all of which are distributed to families through their Food Pantry. The Helping Hands garden provides fresh squash, okra, tomatoes, watermelons, white and sweet potatoes, and a variety of greens and cabbage.



Lack of access to proper nutrition contributes to poor diet and can lead to higher levels of obesity; therefore, MadCAAP clients and their families will benefit from this project as they continue to receive healthy vegetables, learn about healthy eating and healthy food preparation techniques, and learn to **grow their own vegetables.** The "Save our Garden" project will enable MadCAAP clients to make better life choices and adopt healthier lifestyles.

University of Mississippi RebelWell

The Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation is helping to expand the University of Mississippi's fitness and nutrition programs. The Foundation announced the \$250,000 grant for RebelWell, a new program name penned for the expanded offerings on the campus of Ole Miss.

"The goal of the Foundation is to provide targeted funding for initiatives working to support a healthy future for Mississippi's communities, schools, colleges and universities," said Sheila Grogan, Executive Director of the Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation. "The University of Mississippi's RebelWell initiative has the potential to build upon quality, existing programs and resources to extend the positive health impact beyond the university's students, faculty and staff to the surrounding community in creative ways."

The program is designed to help position the university as a leader in programs and initiatives that will improve health, nutrition, exercise and individual wellness.

"I am pleased to see our faculty provide leadership for better health among our employees, students and community," said Dr. Dan Jones, Chancellor of the University of Mississippi (UM). "This support from the Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation enhances those efforts to make us a healthier university and allows us to continue leadership for our state in healthy living."

The university currently offers a number of fitness and nutrition options. The program will add the cohesion needed to

make all of the opportunities easily accessible to faculty, staff, students and the broader community. RebelWell will raise the visibility of many of those programs and expand opportunities for participants to take advantage of a full range of campus and community-based programs. For example, a nutritionist is being added to the staff of UM's Department of Nutrition and Hospitality



Management, annual fitness challenge competitions are in the works and exercise opportunities are planned for various locations across campus. Health screenings and other events will also be

made available to the larger Oxford community. The collaboration across campus and with the Oxford community is a welcome addition to the many departments on board with nutrition and wellness programs. The Department of Nutrition and Hospitality Management offers healthy cooking classes, nutrition classes and a variety of school-based programs, and sees immediate value in these new relationships.

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"Mississippi has so much potential to be healthy. With so many farmers and gardening experts to bring us local meats and produce and some of the best cooks in the country, we have an opportunity to highlight our strengths and set positive nutrition examples for the rest of the region," said Dr. Kathy Knight, Interim Chair of the Department of Nutrition and Hospitality Management.

Dr. Jay Garner, Interim Chair of the UM Department of Health, Exercise Science and Recreation Management, agrees with the potential this new resource provides. **"Our goal is for our community to learn to make healthy changes in their daily lives,**

resulting in life-long healthy habits. The Foundation is making it possible for us to provide tools and proper training to anyone who wants to learn."

"Beyond reducing healthcare costs, promoting employee well-being contributes to the overall success of the University and community," said Andrea Jekabsons, UM Assistant Director of Employment and Training. **"This grant is an opportunity to promote a healthy work culture by assessing the attitudes of our faculty and staff, providing additional education resources, aligning our policies to support a wellness culture, and making 'healthy' the new norm."**

Tougaloo College Connecting Campus to Community

Health and wellness are important life skills students can develop while in college. The "Tougaloo College Community Wellness" initiative is giving faculty, staff, students and the local Tougaloo College community opportunities to take part in programs, activities and services that impact health and wellness. Tougaloo College joins other Mississippi colleges and universities in creating healthy campus cultures.

The Tougaloo College Owens Health and Wellness Center, in partnership with the Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation, hosted a groundbreaking ceremony to mark the beginning of the construction phase of the TC Squared (Tougaloo College-Tougaloo Community) Walking Trail. The one-third mile walking trail will connect to campus sidewalks and will have five outdoor exercise and stretching stations.

"This walking trail will make our campus more livable. It will preserve and restore open space and provide opportunities for physical activity to improve fitness and mental health," stated Dr. Sandra Hayes, Executive Director, Tougaloo College



Owens Health and Wellness Center. **"In addition to improving fitness for our campus and community, construction of this project will make Tougaloo College a more inviting campus, thereby connecting campus to community."**

The "Tougaloo College Community Wellness" initiative fitness events include community gardening, health fairs, field days, walk/run events, cooking demonstrations and free fitness classes.

City of Ridgeland Celebrates New Fitness Equipment

A ribbon cutting for the new "Healthiest Hometown" Fitness Equipment was held at the Ridgeland Multi-Use Trail Facility. As the 2013 winner of the "Healthiest Hometown Award," the City of Ridgeland received a \$50,000 grant from the Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation. The grant money was used to help



purchase fitness equipment for Ridgeland's outdoor recreation areas. This project, titled "Fitness for All," is designed to provide users of all ages and abilities with a complete outdoor fitness experience at public parks and trails in Ridgeland.

Equipment pieces were selected to complement existing facilities and to maximize the health and wellness impact of the grant. Over the winter months, equipment was ordered and installed at the Ridgeland Multi-Use Trail, Freedom Ridge Park and Friendship Park. Since the Ridgeland Multi-Use Trail is used primarily for cardio conditioning, equipment installed for trail users allows for cross training through strength-building. Station equipment pieces include an Adult Fitness Unit, Horizontal Chin Station, Step-Up Fitness Station and Bench Dip Station.



"The City of Ridgeland is providing its residents with opportunities for a well-rounded fitness regimen with the addition of the equipment," said Sheila Grogan,

Executive Director of the Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation. "As we approach the warmer months, we expect many of the city's residents to take advantage of the new equipment along with a variety of additional recreational opportunities available to them."

For additional information about the Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation, please visit our website at www.healthiermississippi.org.

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