



Building a Healthy Mississippi

Fall 2022

Building Healthy Schools | Playgrounds

Foundation Gifts Playgrounds to Schools Across Mississippi



(Pictured above: Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation Health and Fitness Coordinator, Eugenia King (far right), joins school personnel and students at Franklin County Upper Elementary School for a ribbon cutting to celebrate the new playground gifted to the school by the Foundation.)

This fall, the **Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation** held ribbon cuttings for school playgrounds at **Franklin County Upper Elementary School** in Meadville and **Weddington Elementary School** in Greenville. Eugenia King, the Foundation’s health and fitness coordinator, made remarks at both events which were attended by school administrators, teachers, students, parents and local media outlets.

Eugenia King said: “The Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation is proud to provide spacious school playgrounds where students can engage

in active play outside of the classroom. The playground structures are designed for physical activities such as climbing, crawling, jumping and running to improve balance, flexibility and cardiovascular health while promoting creativity and building social skills.”

In 2022, the Foundation provided grant funding for 11 school playgrounds across the state. All playgrounds are scheduled for completion this school year.

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Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation

Vision

A Healthy Mississippi

Mission

Provide leadership and targeted grant funding for sustainable initiatives and programs to improve the overall health and well-being of Mississippians

Strategic Focus

- Communities
- Schools

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Weddington Elementary



Weddington Elementary



Franklin County Upper Elementary

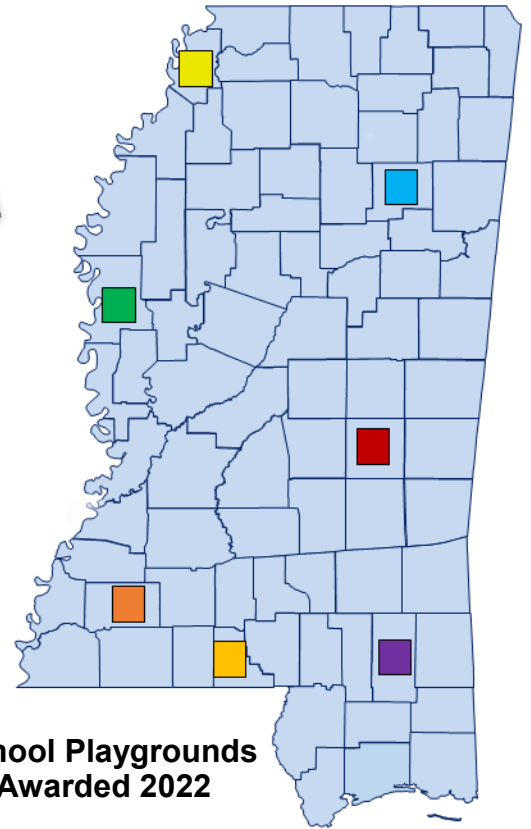


Weddington Elementary

BUILDING HEALTHY SCHOOLS



Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation



School Playgrounds Awarded 2022

- **Chickasaw County Public School District**
 - Houlika Attendance Center
 - Houston Lower Elementary School
 - Houston Upper Elementary School
- **Coahoma County Public School District**
 - Friars Point Elementary School
 - Jonestown Elementary School
 - Lyon Elementary School
- **Franklin County Public School District**
 - Franklin County Upper Elementary School
- **Greenville Municipal Public School District**
 - Weddington Elementary School
- **Perry County Public School District**
 - Richton Elementary School
- **Union Municipal Public School District**
 - Union Elementary School
- **Walthall County Public School District**
 - Salem Attendance Center

School Gardens Produce Sustainable Healthy Nutrition

The **Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation School Garden Program** is designed to fully integrate into the fabric of participating schools and the academic experience of every student by putting nutritious food at their fingertips. As of 2022, the Foundation has funded **74 school gardens** impacting a total of **40,219 students** in grades K-12 in **41 Mississippi counties**.



MISSISSIPPI | Foundation

SCHOOL GARDEN PROGRAM

Grants Awarded: 74 | Number of Counties: 41

Overall Impact Reported by Schools

Increased students' knowledge of growing fruits and vegetables	84%
Developed sustainable healthy nutrition habits	81%
Incorporated garden activities into academic curricula	69%



(Pictured above: Students at Mannsdale Upper Elementary School in Madison County harvest sweet potatoes in the garden and tend to plants in the greenhouse in preparation to sell produce at the local farmers' market. Market sales are part of the school's ongoing sustainability plan for the garden.)



(Pictured above: DeLisle Elementary School students in Gulfport grow lemons to make sugar-free lemonade and add zest to meals.)

“We are appreciative of the added value of a school garden and access to fresh fruits, herbs and vegetables, along with having the outdoor classroom as a resource. New teachers say the garden was one of the reasons they chose to teach at our school.”

*Connie Skrmetta
Physical Education Teacher
DeLisle Elementary School*

“Spotter’s Adventure Trail” at LeFleur’s Bluff State Park Nears Completion

Construction is nearing completion on “Spotter’s Adventure Trail” at LeFleur’s Bluff Education and Tourism Complex in Jackson. “Spotter’s Adventure Trail” features an original story of “Spotter the Otter” that is native to the Mississippi Pearl River, a key geographic feature of LeFleur’s Bluff State Park. The Trail provides engaging, family-oriented opportunities to travel between the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science and the Mississippi Children’s Museum, so guests can conveniently visit both museums. The Trail will be fully completed in early 2023, including the installation of all educational activities, play structures, signage, fencing and landscaping.



(Pictured above: Students from Spann Elementary School in Jackson take the inaugural walk on “Spotter’s Adventure Trail.” Photo courtesy of the Mississippi Children’s Museum.)



Signage at Trail Head

increase. The Playground, Outdoor Classroom and Pavilion and Museum Trail were funded by a generous grant from the **Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation.**

The Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries & Parks Foundation reported more than **100,000** individuals visited the LeFleur’s Bluff Education and Tourism Complex since the new playground opened in December 2021, while the Mississippi Children’s Museum saw a **20 percent increase** in visitation over the summer and the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science a **17 percent**

Foundation Supports Strengthened Tobacco-Free College Campus Policies

The **Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation** is providing ongoing support to Mississippi’s universities and colleges by encouraging strengthened tobacco-free policies that align with the *Model Policy for a Smoke-free College/University* as published by the American Nonsmokers’ Rights Foundation (ANRF). The Foundation is using a tiered approach for awarding grant funds to universities and colleges willing to adopt tobacco-free policies that include 100 percent of the elements of the *Model Policy*.

Delta State University (DSU) is the first university to fully implement the *Model Policy* (Mississippi Delta Community College in Sunflower County was the first community college to fully implement the *Model Policy*). DSU completed all three tiers of the initiative, including adopting a strengthened policy (Tier 1), initial implementation of the strengthened policy (Tier 2) and full implementation and enforcement of the strengthened policy (Tier 3).

DSU used part of the \$50,000 grant award to build a sand volleyball court located between residence halls and open to all community members. In the spirit of a tobacco-free campus, the university hosted the first annual “**Spike Out the Smoke**” intramural volleyball tournament at the beginning of the 2022 academic year to encourage physical activity and bring awareness to the benefits of living tobacco-free.



(Pictured Above: Students at Delta State University participate in the “Spike Out the Smoke” intramural volleyball tournament on the new sand volleyball court provided by Foundation grant funds.)

Foundation's Award Programs Recognize Healthy Communities and Schools

2023 Healthy Hometown Awards and Healthy School Awards Applications Now Available!

The **Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation Healthy Hometown Awards Program** was established in 2010 to encourage and reward exemplary community health and wellness. The Foundation exists to improve the overall health and well-being of Mississippians, and this award assists municipal leaders in their efforts to make their communities – and ultimately our state – a healthier place to live, work and play.

Since the inaugural year of the Healthy Hometown Awards Program, the Foundation has awarded 22 winning municipalities with a combined total of \$1.1 million. For the 2023 Program, the Foundation increased the “Healthy Hometown” grant award from \$50,000 to **\$100,000** each, regardless of municipality population. One hometown may be awarded, or multiple hometowns may be awarded.



The 2023 “Healthy Hometown” application is available on the Foundation’s website at www.healthiermississippi.org. Applications are due to the Foundation by March 1, 2023, and winners will be announced at the Mississippi Municipal League Annual Conference scheduled for June 2023 in Biloxi.

Healthy SCHOOL Awards



The **Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation Healthy School Awards Program** recognizes and rewards public K-12 schools that encourage healthy lifestyle behaviors. The Program was created in 2015, and as of this year, the Foundation has provided 18 winning schools a grand total of \$725,000.

The 2023 Healthy School Awards application is available on the Foundation’s website at www.healthiermississippi.org. Applications are due by March 1, 2023. Winning schools will be announced in July 2023 at the Mississippi Association of School Superintendents Summer Conference where one or more schools may be honored with a “Healthy School Award,” each at **\$50,000**, regardless of school enrollment.

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

Fall 2022 News

Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation