



Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation

A Subsidiary of Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi.

News

Building a Healthy Mississippi

Fall 2023

The Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation Hosts Physical Education Conferences Across the State



(Pictured above: Students at Pearl Upper Elementary School demonstrate physical activity skills on the Project Fit America horizontal ladder during the Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation Regional Physical Education Conference held in Central Mississippi for veteran and new physical education teachers.)

Mississippi elementary and middle schools are building cultures of health and wellness with support from the **Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation**. Earlier this fall, the Foundation funded physical education conferences across the state to include conferences in **Indianola** in the Delta, **Olive Branch** in north Mississippi, **Pearl** in central Mississippi and **Gulfport** on the Gulf Coast.

The four conferences brought together **60 physical education teachers** from across Mississippi to participate in energetic educational sessions and share best practices for engaging students and making P.E. classes both exciting and effective. With Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation grant funds, participants received hands-on classroom instruction by **Project Fit America**, indoor

physical fitness equipment and curricula to enhance their schools' P.E. programs. The physical fitness equipment included weighted hoops, stability balls, heavy ropes and more along with corresponding curricula designed to help teachers find imaginative and innovative ways to get students moving.

"The Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation is proud to partner with K-8 schools as they implement and sustain structured physical education programs, said Foundation Director Eugenia King. "We applaud these teachers for demonstrating outstanding leadership as healthy role models and providing exemplary P.E. programs to increase students' fitness levels."

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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
- Access to Care

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**Gulf Coast Conference
Host Site:**

**West Elementary
School**

Gulfport



“I absolutely loved this conference! The coaches were awesome, and I learned more ways to have fun with my students while letting them discover new skills.”

*Sandy McLeod
Leakesville Elementary School
Greene County School District*



**North Mississippi
Conference Host
Site:**

**Overpark Elementary
School**

Olive Branch

“This is the only formal P.E. classroom training I’ve ever received. I’m new to teaching P.E., and every activity lesson I learned at the conference is easy to do with my students.”

*Erin Tucker
Dorsey Attendance Center
Itawamba County School District*

**Delta Conference
Host Site:**

**Indianola
Community
Wellness Center**

Indianola



“This conference provided so much good information, and I am excited to share with my students!”

*Lavell Strong
Jonestown Elementary School
Coahoma County School District*



**Central Mississippi
Conference Host Site:**

**Pearl Upper
Elementary School**

Pearl

“I rank this conference a 10 out of 10! It has sparked a fire in me to incorporate the Project Fit America activities into my other classes as well.”

*Catrina Mills
Pearl Upper Elementary School
Rankin County School District*

LeFleur's Bluff Education and Tourism Complex Project Completed

In late November 2023, the LeFleur's Bluff Education and Tourism Complex in Jackson celebrated the grand opening of Spotter's Adventure Trail. The **Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation** funded the LeFleur's Bluff Playground, Outdoor Classroom and Pavilion and Spotter's Adventure Trail with a generous **\$4.2 million grant** in late 2020. The Foundation's leadership team played a visionary role in developing the state-of-the-art playground and complex, and the opening of the Trail completes the project, as the playground and outdoor classroom and pavilion opened in December 2021.

Spotter's Adventure Trail connects the Mississippi Museum of Natural Science, the Mississippi Children's Museum and the LeFleur's Bluff Playground for guests to safely and conveniently visit both museums and the playground. The eight-foot-wide trail features a fun and interactive outdoor experience with "Spotter the Otter" and friends surrounded by a canopy of Southern Magnolia varieties of various sizes.

The Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries & Parks reported more than **400,000** individuals had visited the LeFleur's Bluff Education and Tourism Complex since the new playground opened in December 2021, including visitors from all **82 Mississippi counties**, **42 states**, **Washington, D.C.** and **5 countries**.



(Pictured above then clockwise: "Spotter the Otter" stands ready to greet visitors to the LeFleur's Bluff Education and Tourism Complex where Southern Magnolias adorn the entrance to Spotter's Adventure Trail; Children climb the Hedra Tower on the LeFleur's Bluff Playground; and the Outdoor Classroom and Pavilion welcomes park visitors with a place to enjoy a group activity, live concert or picnic. All images courtesy of the Mississippi Children's Museum—Jackson.)

Foundation's Award Programs Recognize Healthy Communities and Schools

2024 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 24 winning municipalities with a combined total of \$1.1 million. The Foundation may award a “Healthy Hometown” grant to one hometown, or award “Healthy Hometown” grants to multiple hometowns, each at **\$100,000**, regardless of municipality population.



The 2024 “Healthy Hometown” application is available on the Foundation’s website at www.healthiermississippi.org. Applications are due to the Foundation by March 1, 2024, and winners will be announced at the Mississippi Municipal League Annual Conference scheduled for June 2024 in Biloxi.



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 19 winning schools a grand total of \$775,000.

The 2024 Healthy School Awards application is available on the Foundation’s website at www.healthiermississippi.org. Applications are due by March 1. Winning schools will be announced in July 2024 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.

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