



## Building a Healthy Mississippi

Summer 2018

### Mississippi School Gardens are “Springing into Motion”

Raising Academic Excellence while Growing Gardeners for the Future

**Pontotoc Middle School**, home to 340 fifth- and sixth-graders in a small rural community, transformed to a **Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) A-rated school** where faculty members describe their school as a “family” focused on helping students be their very best each day.



*Above left: A welcoming entrance to Pontotoc Middle School’s garden. Above right: Pontotoc Middle School leaders placed an “A” at the front entrance as a visual testament to the school’s academic success.*

The school’s partnership with the **Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation** played a central role in a cultural change for the school that included a holistic focus on educating the whole child, mentally, physically and academically through an edible school garden program. The garden was integrated into all aspects of school life including curricula, positive behavior reinforcement and school fund raising.

During the summer of 2018, the Foundation hosted a **School Garden Workshop**, inviting school leaders to learn about the successes seen at Pontotoc Middle School since the implementation of their garden. The school’s garden initiative, funded by the Foundation and known as **Springing into Motion**, has provided many opportunities for learning and student and community involvement. The Foundation worked with Pontotoc Middle School to develop the **School Garden Model** which provides best practices to Mississippi schools interested in starting their own school gardens with grant funding from the Foundation.

“The Springing into Motion initiative at Pontotoc Middle School transformed the school in many ways,” said Sheila Grogan, executive director of the Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation. “The garden has been integrated into all aspects of the school environment, including a variety of lessons for different subject areas. It has brought the students and staff together with a sense of ownership and accomplishment for everyone while improving overall school performance.”

Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation

#### Vision

A Healthy Mississippi

#### Mission

Provide targeted grants to fund health programs and initiatives to improve the health of Mississippians

#### Strategic Focus

- Schools
- Colleges and Universities
- Communities
- Wellness Coaches

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## 2019 Application is Available!

# 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. Winning schools have health policies and programs that promote healthy eating, physical activity, staff wellness and tobacco-free lifestyles among students and staff, as well as parents and the community at large. Healthy schools help students achieve full academic potential and support them in developing lifelong healthy behaviors.

The Foundation will award up to four grants. One school will be designated as the 2019 **“The Healthiest School in Mississippi”** and will be awarded a **\$50,000** grant. Three schools will be designated as “Healthy Schools” and each will receive a **\$25,000** grant. The criteria for these awards are based on state and national school health standards.

**What are the Foundation’s strategic goals for this awards program?** The Foundation established four strategic goals for the Healthy School Awards Program: 1) Establish a school culture of health and wellness; 2) Build and sustain a school health and wellness program; 3) Improve the health of school personnel, students and their families; and 4) Improve academic performance of the school.

**Who is eligible?** The Healthy School Awards Program is open to public K-12 schools physically located in Mississippi. The award is at the school level– not at the district level.

**How does my school apply?** Visit the Foundation’s website at [www.healthiermississippi.org](http://www.healthiermississippi.org), then go to the “Healthy Awards/Healthy School Awards” page and click the “Request the Healthy School Awards Application” button. **Applications are due by October 26, 2018.**

## Congratulations to the 2018 Healthy School Awards Winners!



Ocean Springs High School  
“Mississippi’s Healthiest School 2018”  
\$50,000 Grant Award



Poplarville Lower Elementary School  
“Mississippi Healthy School 2018”  
\$25,000 Grant Award



Oxford Intermediate School  
“Mississippi Healthy School 2018”  
\$25,000 Grant Award

**Thank you to Mississippi’s Healthy Schools working to support a healthy Mississippi and a healthier future for all.**

*Previous Healthy School Awards winners include:*

Northside Elementary School — Clinton  
Forrest County Agricultural High School — Brooklyn  
Ocean Springs Upper Elementary School — Ocean Springs  
Ocean Springs High School — Ocean Springs

Twenty-Eighth Street Elementary School — Gulfport  
Grenada Upper Elementary School — Grenada  
Columbia Elementary School — Columbia  
Pass Christian Elementary School — Pass Christian

# Building Healthy SCHOOLS Grant



Blue Cross & Blue Shield of  
Mississippi Foundation

A Subsidiary of Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi.

The **Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation Building Healthy Schools Grant Program** was developed for public and private K-12 schools employing a **certified physical education teacher or health education teacher** who is a member of the Mississippi Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (**MAHPERD**). The **\$5,000** grant award is provided to assist schools in implementing and sustaining a structured physical education program to improve the health and fitness of students.

For additional details, or to request a **2018 Building Healthy Schools Grant Application**, please call the Foundation at 601-664-4473. The Foundation will announce the Building Healthy Schools Grant recipient(s) at the MAHPERD Conference to be held November 1-2, 2018, at The University of Southern Mississippi — Gulf Park campus in Long Beach.

## Bell Academy Promotes “P.E. Palace” of Wellness

“The Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation has given our school [Bell Academy] the ability to excel, without limits, in health and physical education. Using the \$5,000 Building Healthy Schools Grant as seed money, we completed our biggest physical education project — constructing a metal building we call our ‘P.E. Palace.’ The community matched the \$5,000 grant funds, and parents helped construct the building.

Before the metal building, we were limited on space and often used the science lab, parking lot or cafeteria for P.E. classes. Now our possibilities are only limited by our imaginations!

Having a place to call our own has allowed me to become a better teacher. I am able to have structured and organized P.E. classes which benefit the students. The ‘P.E. Palace’ is also a benefit to our teachers and staff members. We are using the building for exercise classes to promote health and wellness to our faculty, staff and community members.” - *Joyce Aycock, Physical Education Teacher, Bell Academy, Cleveland School District*

*Photos at right (top to bottom): Joyce Aycock (center), students and community members celebrate the grand opening of the “P.E. Palace;” Bell Academy students participate in physical fitness classes inside the “P.E. Palace.”*



# Get Ready to Run

presented by  
Blue Cross Blue Shield  
of Mississippi

It's good to be Blue.

**The Get Ready to Run School Program** is back! This school year, students in grades K-5 in Central Mississippi, the Golden Triangle, North Mississippi and the Pine Belt will be eligible to participate in the 2018-19 program. Visit [www.getreadytorunms.com](http://www.getreadytorunms.com) to find out if your school is in an eligible region, then encourage school leaders to sign up!



## Honoring Mississippi's Healthy Hometowns Ridgeland and Forest Receive 2018 "Healthy Hometown" Awards

**The Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation** established the **Healthy Hometown Awards Program** to encourage and reward exemplary community health and wellness efforts. The winning cities are those that have made the most strides in creating a healthy community and demonstrated the highest level of commitment to a healthy culture.

The Foundation announced the winners of the 2018 Healthy Hometown Awards Program at the Mississippi Municipal League Annual Conference in Biloxi on July 27, 2018. In the ninth year of the Program, the **City of Ridgeland** was named "**Mississippi's Healthiest Hometown,**" and the **City of Forest** received a Healthy Hometown honor. Ridgeland received a **\$50,000** grant from the Foundation to support ongoing community health initiatives, and Forest received a **\$25,000** grant to continue its wellness efforts.

Healthy Hometown applications are evaluated by a panel of known health and wellness champions from Mississippi and around the country.

Judges for the 2018 Healthy Hometown Awards Program were: **Gloria J. Ross, Ph.D.**, chair and professor of Mississippi Valley State University's Health, Physical Education and Recreation Department, who oversees the university's wellness programs; **Anna Threadcraft, RDN, LD**, director of employee wellness at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, who has more than a decade of experience in international health education, media and networking; and **Robert Z. Carr, Jr.**, provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, who is a lifelong health and wellness advocate and serves as a role model for living a healthy lifestyle.

The Healthy Hometown Awards Program was established in 2010 to



reward municipalities taking initiatives to improve the health and lives of citizens. The Program assists municipal leaders in their efforts to make their communities, and ultimately our state, a healthier place to live.

For more information about the Healthy Hometown Awards Program and winning municipalities, visit the Foundation's website at [www.healthiermississippi.org](http://www.healthiermississippi.org).

For additional information about the Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation, please visit our website at [www.healthiermississippi.org](http://www.healthiermississippi.org).