

BlueCross Grants to Jump Start PE at 20 Tennessee Schools

Middle grades encouraged to apply for funds to battle childhood obesity

CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. — Twenty Tennessee schools will soon receive a nationally acclaimed middle grades physical education program and exercise equipment – together valued at \$10,000 for each school – from the BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee Health Foundation.

Applications for the Foundation's *Shape the State* grant program are being taken today through Aug. 15 from any public, private or parochial Tennessee school serving grades 6-8. Grant winners will be announced Sept. 12. The grant provides the curriculum, teacher training and equipment for each recipient school.

“This is another important leap forward in our efforts to combat childhood obesity in Tennessee,” said Calvin Anderson, BlueCross senior vice president of corporate affairs, and executive director of the Foundation. “The [SPARK](#) physical education curriculum gives students fun tools they can use to achieve fitness through active play and healthy eating.”

According to the state Department of Health, about 40 percent of Tennessee children are overweight or obese. Children who are obese are more likely to grow into obese adults, studies show. Obesity dramatically increases a person's risk for [dangerous health conditions](#), such as Type 2 diabetes, heart disease and cancer, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The Tennessee Health Foundation has for years funded anti-obesity programs for children, including:

- Helping put the Growing Healthy curriculum into more than 50 schools in northeast Tennessee.
- Hosting a best practices forum in Nashville, bringing together experts and organizations dedicated to fighting the childhood obesity problem in Tennessee.
- Paying for the “[Good For You: Healthy Fun on the Run](#),” exhibit to tour children's museums across the state.

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SPARK was launched in 1989 after being developed by researchers at San Diego State University. Since then, its evidence-based curriculum has been used in public schools, YMCAs and other settings across the nation.

In addition to providing the SPARK curriculum and exercise equipment, the Foundation will present winning schools an additional \$1,000 to support PE, nutrition and wellness programs, while providing social media opportunities for the 20 schools to share the progress and success of their students on the Internet.

Schools can apply online at <http://shapethestate.com/apply>, or e-mail shapethestate@bcbst.com for more information.

About Tennessee Health Foundation, Inc.

The BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee Health Foundation, Inc. (THF) was established in December, 2003 as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation organized to promote the philanthropic mission of BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee. THF awards grants focused on high-impact initiatives across the state, which promote healthy lifestyle choices and help control health care costs for all Tennessee residents. Working with civic and economic partners, THF is dedicated to the support of research, innovative programs and creative approaches to improve the health and quality of life of Tennesseans for generations to come.

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