FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CITY OF YORK, CAPITAL BLUE CROSS AND HIGHMARK BLUE SHIELD BRING

PLAY STREETS TO COMMUNITY

Partnership for a Healthier America and the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association to support new initiative to combat childhood obesity by creating spaces for play

(York, PA) November 14, 2012 – The City of York, has been selected to receive support to create Play Streets – roads closed to traffic and opened to the community to encourage physical activity. The Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association (BCBSA) and Partnership for a Healthier America (PHA), which works with the private sector and its Honorary Chair First Lady Michelle Obama to end the childhood obesity epidemic in America, are working with the City of York and local Blue Plans, Capital Blue Cross and Highmark Blue Shield to create new places for kids to play, particularly in neighborhoods that lack open space.

As partners in health, the community and locally-based Blue Plans are working together to build a healthier York community.

Over the next year, York will work with, BCBSA, PHA, Capital Blue Cross and Highmark Blue Shield to hold Play Streets in the community. “As York works to make healthy lifestyles as accessible as possible, we need to remember that keeping kids active isn’t a secret – they just need places to be kids. A Play Street provides a place for them to do just that, and takes advantage of our existing infrastructure. It’s inexpensive, accessible and, most importantly, fun for the whole community. With the local Blue Plans supporting our efforts, we’ll be able to bring this exciting new program to the children of York,” stated York Mayor C. Kim Bracey.

“It is important for children to get in the habit of being active,” said David Skerpon, Capital BlueCross Vice President, Retail Strategies and Brand Management. “Play Streets allows us to work with community partners to deliver the space and encouragement kids in York need to play and improve their health. Playing is not just fun – it is an easy way for children to learn about physical exercise. The earlier in life our youth form these healthy habits, the better the chance they will become lifetime habits.”
“We’re committed to providing children in the community opportunities to be active. As in many cities, there aren’t enough safe places for children to play and this unique opportunity will change that for the City of York. We know that a child’s overall health is greatly impacted by the amount of physical activity he/she receives, which is why Play Streets is so important. We look forward to working with the City of York to host Play Streets events to encourage kids to play and be active – a key step on the road to a healthy lifestyle,” says Susan Hubley, Highmark Blue Shield Director of Community Affairs.

The impact on activity rates from Play Streets is expected to be significant. Pioneer programs have already shown that when given the choice between participating in Play Streets or a sedentary activity, the majority of children chose the more active option of Play Streets. The benefits went beyond children’s health, too. Local economies can profit from the increased foot traffic that Play Streets brings to the businesses in the area.

“Today in America, one in five kids doesn’t have access to a playground – that’s millions of children who can’t pick up a ball, run outside or have fun in a safe environment,” said PHA President and CEO Lawrence A. Soler. “We’re thrilled that Capital Blue Cross and Highmark Blue Shield and the City of York are proactively tackling this challenge by creating new Play Streets. We can’t wait to see the initiative in action – to see kids running around these new spaces and to hear sounds of traffic replaced by sounds of kids at play.”

Details about the location and dates of the Play Streets events in York can be found online at www.ahealthieramerica.org/playstreets and www.yorkcity.org

**About Capital Blue Cross**

Capital BlueCross is a leading health insurer in its region, providing health insurance coverage to residents in central Pennsylvania and the Lehigh Valley. Capital BlueCross is committed to making health insurance simple for its customers and members through all the stages of life by offering nationally acclaimed customer service and a full range of innovative benefit programs for groups and individuals at competitive prices. By establishing a culture of caring, Capital BlueCross constantly strives to do more in order to deliver more for the men, women and children who depend on the company for their health insurance. The company continues to evolve in order to meet the individual needs of its customers, most recently by entering the retail market and building its first store in the Lehigh Valley called Capital Blue. Capital BlueCross has been providing medical value to the people and communities of central Pennsylvania and the Lehigh Valley for more than 70 years and employs over 1,800 people in the region. Headquartered in Harrisburg, Pa., Capital BlueCross is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. More information about Capital BlueCross and its subsidiaries can be found by going to www.capbluecross.com.

**About Highmark Blue Shield**

Highmark Blue Shield serves approximately 1 million members through the company’s health care benefits business and employs nearly 4,000 people in central Pennsylvania and the Lehigh Valley. Highmark Blue Shield is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, an
association of independent Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies. For more information about Highmark Blue Shield, visit www.highmark.com

About City of York

York city, population of 43,318 has worked since 2008 to improve opportunities for physical activity. In 2008, York became a Kaboom Playful City. Bring On Play (BOP), a volunteer organization that supports York City Parks and Recreation has been hosting the Annual Day of Play event since 2008. BOP’s initial goal to renovate one city park per year has grown to promote the importance of fun, safe and physically challenging playgrounds and offer other types of family oriented physical activities. In 2010, York received the CDC ACHIEVE designation (Action Communities for Health, Innovation and Environment Change) and joined the First Lady’s Let’s Move Initiative. The ACHIEVE designation led to the development of the Eat Play Breathe York (EPBY) health Initiative that has the goal to improve nutrition, increase physical activity and decrease the use and effects of tobacco. Collaborations developed from these initiatives have propelled York to host many Play Streets-type events over the last several years. York’s initiative, Lets Move York City, is focused on encouraging the community to become active, healthy, and fit. Community members can log onto the Let’s Move York City website, register, and begin to manage their weight and minutes of physical activity. www.yorkcity.org

About Partnership for a Healthier America

Partnership for a Healthier America (PHA) is devoted to working with the private sector to ensure the health of our nation’s youth by solving the childhood obesity crisis. In 2010, PHA was created in conjunction with – but independent from – First Lady Michelle Obama’s Let’s Move! effort. PHA is a nonpartisan nonprofit organization that is led by some of the nation’s most respected health and childhood obesity experts. PHA brings together public, private and nonprofit leaders to broker meaningful commitments and develop strategies to end childhood obesity. Most importantly, PHA ensures that commitments made are commitments kept by working with unbiased third parties to monitor and publicly report on the progress its partners are making. For more information about PHA, please visit www.aHealthierAmerica.org and follow PHA on Twitter @PHAnews.

About the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association

The Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association (BCBSA) is a national federation of 38 independent, community-based and locally operated Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies that collectively provide healthcare coverage for 100 million members – one in three Americans. For more information on BCBSA and its member companies, please visit bcbs.com, connect with BCBSA on Facebook, check out BCBSA videos on YouTube or follow BCBSA on Twitter for up-to-date information.

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