Capital Blue Cross, Eat Play Breathe York, and York City to 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.) June 14, 2013 – York City, Highmark Blue Shield, and Eat Play Breathe York have 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 York City, Capital Blue Cross and Eat Play Breathe York to create new places for kids to play, particularly in neighborhoods that lack open space.

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

Over the next year, York City will work with Highmark Blue Shield, Eat Play Breathe York, BCBSA and PHA to hold Play Streets in the community. The next event will be held on June 19 from 6-8:30 p.m. at Kiwanis Lake and Newberry Street. The event is free and our goal is provide a fun, family friendly free event for the community. Activities include will include BOP's Imagination Playground, BOP's NEOS, The York Water Company's water splash station, inflatable's, caricature drawings, face painting, haircuts, healthy snacks, free t-shirts and prizes, and live local entertainment.

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, Eat Play Breathe York, and York City 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.”

The Eat Play Breathe York initiative is working to improve the health of York community members through better food access, increased physical activity and decreased access to tobacco. The committee
works to achieve these goals by creating safer pathways and bike routes and by renovating local city parks, improving nutrition by increasing access to healthy food options in neighborhoods, schools and the workplace, and decreasing access to harmful tobacco and second-hand smoke.

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