SAPPHIREAward
THE BLUE FOUNDATION FOR A HEALTHY FLORIDA

2009 PROFILES

Recognizing Community Health Excellence

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SAPPHIREAward
THE BLUE FOUNDATION FOR A HEALTHY FLORIDA

RECOGNIZING COMMUNITY HEALTH EXCELLENCE

The mission of The Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida is to enhance access to quality health-related services for Floridians through strategic grantmaking to Florida's nonprofits that serve the state's uninsured and underserved. The Sapphire Award is the result of our desire to recognize excellence among the programs that create a significant positive impact on health-related outcomes for the state's at-risk people and communities.

The 2009 Sapphire Award honorees represent programs that demonstrate excellence and achievements through processes that can be replicated in other communities and programs. The characteristics that these honorees possess are many. In addition to a creative and passionate approach to serving unmet needs in their communities, these programs demonstrate continuous improvement. As learning organizations, they constantly seek expert advice, updated information on their clients' needs and the latest developments in best practices. As a group, they overcome obstacles to serve their clients, and they network with other service providers to ensure a complete continuum of care. Some programs depend on volunteers, and all of them share a passion to serve their communities. Their work is improving the health of thousands of Floridians who might otherwise go without care.

Congratulations to the 2009 Sapphire Award honorees.

The Blue Foundation
FOR A HEALTHY FLORIDA

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THE SAPPHIRE AWARD HONOREES FOR 2009

WINNER
($100,000 EACH)

Ann Storck Center, Fort Lauderdale

The Education Fund, Plant a Thousand Gardens
Collaborative Nutrition Initiative, North Miami

AWARD OF DISTINCTION
($75,000)

Comprehensive AIDS Program of Palm Beach County,
Palm Springs

HONORABLE MENTION
($25,000 EACH)

Capital Medical Society Foundation,
We Care Dental Network, Tallahassee

Children's Volunteer Health Network, Santa Rosa Beach

Hispanic Health Initiatives, Casselberry

I.M. Sulzbacher Center for the Homeless, Beaches
Community Healthcare – A Sulzbacher Clinic, Jacksonville

The following pages present brief profiles of the organizations and illustrate how they deliver excellence in community health programming in their own ways. We hope their stories will inspire you as they do us.

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2009 SAPPHIRE AWARD HONOREE
WINNER $100,000

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The Education Fund: Plant A Thousand Gardens Collaborative Nutrition Initiative

The Education Fund is a Miami-Dade County nonprofit that supports innovations in public schools. Its groundbreaking program, called Plant A Thousand Gardens Collaborative Nutrition Initiative (CNI), addresses the alarming rate of childhood obesity, diabetes and other harmful medical conditions due to poor nutritional choices. This student-centered, seed-to-table curriculum program was piloted in five Miami-Dade County elementary schools in 2007-08, expanded to 10 schools in 2008-09, and will expand to 25 schools in the 2009-10 school year. Gardens reached more than 9,000 children in the 2008-2009 school year.

The primary goals of this program are two-fold:

1) to change the eating patterns in elementary school children and their families through a collaborative initiative grounded in hands-on nutrition legacy, and
2) to identify and engage teachers and school leadership in a collaborative action research activity that empowers them to become advocates for nutritional literacy.

CNI takes an innovative approach to combating the deepening public health crisis of childhood obesity, diabetes and nutritional deficiency. Offering hands-on learning opportunities for a wide variety of students to work on community gardens to explore issues of health, nutrition and core academic disciplines is educationally rich and supported by rigorous testing data. Program evaluation data is reported at all levels, including transfer and impact data that verifies an 80% increase in children who report eating vegetables with lunch and a 50% increase in students who report eating vegetables with dinner. Other positive indicators include a reduction of unhealthy foods eaten -- after one year in the program, 50% fewer children ate candy or ice cream at lunch and 45% fewer children ate dinner at a well-known fast food chain. Additionally, during the first year, three cafeterias of the five pilot CNI schools changed their menus in response to requests from students for more healthy foods. Data shows 88% of parents are preparing healthier food this year than last, while 90% said their children request healthier food.

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"Seeing the way my kids are now making smarter choices about nutrition makes me very thankful that my son has been able to be a part of this incredible life changing experience," said one mother. "Not only have his eating habits changed, but the eating habits for the people around him have changed as well. The vegetable garden that the kids made at school has inspired my son to grow his own."

Additionally, accountability, institutional capacity and public outreach are all apparent as evidenced by CNI's use of an evidence-based curriculum that is aligned with Florida Sunshine Standards and Miami-Dade County Public Schools' Pacing Guides, and helps meet a state mandate that requires teachers to devote 150 minutes per week for nutrition and physical education. This, in combination with CNI's use of internal and external program evaluation, which include both qualitative and quantitative strategies, help contribute to its success.

Beyond CNI's strengths in terms of accountability and exemplary standards of practice, this program is a model of community collaboration, involving key stakeholders (e.g., educators, parents, students, chefs, gardeners, community wellness advocates, etc.) in an effort to teach students, and subsequently families, the importance of a nutritious lifestyle. The Education Fund's preventative and community oriented approach allows the target population to take ownership of the program. Additionally, this approach is a sustainable method of ensuring the ongoing health of Floridians by changing students' attitudes towards food and nutritional awareness. In essence, the program is designed to transform students into educated consumers of change, an accomplishment which can have a long lasting impact of the health of this community.

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