

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Top Nonprofits Honored for Improving Health of Floridians

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. – Today, seven of Florida’s top nonprofits received awards for their work in improving the health of Florida’s uninsured and underserved at The Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida’s 2009 Sapphire Award ceremony.

The Sapphire Award is Florida’s only statewide award that recognizes and promotes organizations that have demonstrated excellence in addressing health disparities within their communities.

Honorees of the 2009 Sapphire Award are:

Winners (\$100,000 each)

[Ann Storck Center, Fort Lauderdale](#) – residential, preschool, adult day training and life-enrichment services for children and adults who have severe developmental disabilities

[The Education Fund - Plant a Thousand Gardens Collaborative Nutrition Initiative, Miami-Dade County](#) – hands-on approach to addressing childhood obesity by teaching children about healthy foods and nutrition via planting, maintaining and learning about a vegetable garden

Award of Distinction (\$75,000)

[Comprehensive AIDS Program \(CAP\) of Palm Beach County](#) -- community outreach, education and linkage to medical care and social services for people at risk for contracting, affected by or living with HIV/AIDS

Honorable Mentions (\$25,000 each)

[Children’s Volunteer Health Network, Santa Rosa Beach](#) -- facilitates free immediate access to medical, dental and mental health care for children via a Health Care Referral Program and Mobile Dental Program

[Capital Medical Society Foundation We Care Dental Network, Tallahassee](#) – continuum of care and case management for low-income adults by organizing volunteer dentists and local dental organizations to provide donated care

[Hispanic Health Initiatives, Casselberry](#) – educate and connect medically uninsured individuals and families to free or affordable health education, prevention and medical services

[The Sulzbacher Center for the Homeless, Beaches Community Healthcare, Jacksonville Beach](#) – provides access to basic health care and case management for homeless and indigent persons in the seaside communities of Duval County.

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Page 2, 2009 Sapphire Awards Announced

Established in 2005, The Sapphire Award recognizes and rewards nonprofit community health programs that have demonstrated success and high merit and have a record of improving the health of their community through measurable outcomes.

“These small, large and grassroots organizations play a huge role in bettering the health and wellbeing of their community members who need help the most,” said Susan Towler, vice president, The Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida. “The ways they accomplish their goals should serve as models for similar nonprofits across the state and country.”

To be eligible for The Sapphire Award, organizations must be tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the federal tax code; officially reside and be incorporated in the state of Florida; and have programs that are involved with health-related services. Programs are nominated by three persons familiar with the organization and are reviewed by an independent selection committee made up of medical, public health and health communication experts from across the country and Florida. A total of 30 organizations were nominated for the 2009 Sapphire Award.

Including the 2009 nominees and honorees, a total of 214 nonprofits and health programs have been nominated for excellence in community health programming. Of that number, 11 Winners, six Awards of Distinction, 11 Honorable Mentions and four Finalists were recognized and shared \$1.8 million in award funds.

The Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida is a separate, philanthropic affiliate of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida (BCBSF) incorporated in the state of Florida. The Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida, and its parent, BCBSF, are independent licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, an association of independent Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies. For more information on The Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida, please visit its web site at www.bluefoundationfl.com.

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Note to editors: For still photography, b-roll and more information about this year's honorees, visit The 2009 Sapphire Awards' online media room at www.shepherdmediacenter.com/tbf/.