

FOR RELEASE: UPON RECEIPT

CONTACTS:

Mike Deines, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas, (785) 291-8203

Jeremy Holaday, Kansas State High School Activities Association, (785) 273-5329

TO: *Kansas media outlets*

**BE THE SPARK CHALLENGE OFFERS KAY CLUBS GRANTS
TO HELP GET KANSAS TEENS MOVING**

*Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas gives \$150,000 grant
to Kansas Association for Youth Alumni Network*

In an effort to get Kansas teens to value the importance of leading an active lifestyle, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas is proud to partner with the Kansas Association for Youth (KAY) to launch the *Be the Spark* challenge. The new program supports Kansas youth as they raise awareness amongst their peers regarding the importance of being physically active, and grant dollars will help them create new places in their communities where they can be active.

"*Be the Spark* is a chance for Kansas youth to inspire more movement in their own lives and in their communities," said Virginia Barnes, director of Blue Health Initiatives for the state's largest and only local health insurer. "Being physically active can have a positive influence on individual health, education and earning power. We know that only 28 percent of Kansas high school students participate in at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day. Our partnership with KAY is the perfect opportunity to get this important message inside schools and allow the students to educate and inspire each other."

With an eye towards improving the quality of life in Kansas for future generations, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas is providing a two-year, \$150,000 grant to the Kansas Association of Youth Alumni Network.

--MORE--



Commitment · Compassion · Community

An independent licensee of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association.

"On behalf of the 150+ KAY programs across the state of Kansas, we are absolutely thrilled with this exciting opportunity" said Cheryl Gleason, KSHSAA assistant executive director and KAY state director. "One of our KAY privileges is 'To Live A Healthy Lifestyle.' This partnership with Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas is a perfect fit for the outstanding, creative members of the KAY organization. And we are equally excited about KAYAN, our alumni association, taking the lead to coordinate this adventure."

Be the Spark provides local KAY clubs with the tools to increase awareness of the importance of an active lifestyle. The students are encouraged to complete a series of challenges and share their experiences with photos and videos online, using the **#BeTheSpark** hashtag. The clubs then have the opportunity to apply for mini-grants to create a project where their peers and future generations have access to a fun way to stay physically active. Clubs who have completed the challenges will be given preference in the grant review process.

"We envision Kansans living in healthy communities that provide the highest possible quality of life and well-being," Barnes said. "This generation of Kansas youth has the opportunity to set the bar high for future generations and we are excited that the *Be the Spark* initiative can play an important role in helping them achieve a healthier tomorrow for all Kansans."

--30--

About Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas

For 75 years, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas has built a reputation of trust with its members and contracting providers by providing outstanding customer service while quickly and accurately processing claims; fairly administering benefit plans and contracts; offering programs, services and tools to help members improve or maintain their health; and operating under the highest ethical standards while being good stewards of premium dollars. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association and is the state's largest insurer, serving all Kansas counties except Johnson and Wyandotte. For more information, visit bcbsks.com.

About Kansas Association for Youth

The Kansas Association for Youth (KAY) is a character-building, leadership-training, service program directed by the Kansas State High School Activities Association. This nationally acclaimed organization provides students an opportunity to learn to assume their citizenship responsibilities and to enrich their personalities through well-organized programs, projects and parties. Programs

educate, inspire and direct members into carefully planned service projects. These projects emphasize four areas of service - school, community, nation and world. KAY is a student association unique to Kansas. The KSHSAA proudly offers this activity to Kansas students, through its member schools, as a means to "make a world of difference" for current and future generations. For more information, visit <http://www.kshsaa.org/Public/KAY/Main.cfm>.

About Kansas Association for Youth Alumni Network

The Kansas Association of Youth Alumni Network was founded in 2012 as an opportunity for KAY alumni to connect with one another and continue their support of the KAY organization. The goal and vision of KAYAN is to preserve and maintain the history of the KAY program, utilize personal resources and talent to develop a strong legacy for the program, maintain the pride, spirit and fellowship of the KAY organization, and promote the further growth of clubs as they serve school, community, nation and the world. For more information on KAYAN, visit www.kayankansas.org/information.