

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey

*Making Healthcare Work.*

## **“Healthy U” Program to Lower Obesity Rates in 18,000 New Jersey Children**

**(Newark, September 16, 2008)** The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey and the New Jersey YMCA State Alliance announced today the launch of the Healthy U, a collaboration to reduce obesity in 18,000 New Jersey children. The Healthy U initiative is committed to reducing obesity rates in these children by 10% over the next four years.

“The Healthy U program, we believe, will be New Jersey’s first childhood obesity initiative to be coordinated on a statewide basis that will provide objective and measurable results,” said William J. Marino, Chairman of the Board of Directors of The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey. “Using the acclaimed and proven Coordinated Approach to Child Health (CATCH) curriculum, developed by the University of Texas, Healthy U promises to lower obesity rates in children taking part in the program by 10 percent. We believe Healthy U will make a positive impact and produce healthier children. That’s our ultimate goal.”

“The Healthy U program will be open to children between the ages of 5 -12, who are enrolled in YMCA after school programs. Healthy U is fun for children and it encourages strong family involvement,” said Gary Graham, Executive Director, New Jersey State Alliance of YMCAs. “It is our pleasure to offer this new program to our members and we would like to thank The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey for making this program possible.”

Assemblyman Gary Schaer noted, “Childhood obesity is one of the major problems facing families in New Jersey and it takes a terrible toll on New Jersey’s health care system. I commend The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey and the New Jersey YMCA State Alliance for tackling this issue. If successful, the Healthy U program will not only help our children, it will also lower long-term health care costs.”

“Having our children participate in the Healthy U program puts them on the right track to live long, happy and healthful lives,” said Garfield Mayor Frank Calandriello. “The City of Garfield is proud to help the YMCA and Horizon Foundation for New Jersey introduce this innovative approach to reducing childhood obesity.”

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## **About Healthy U**

- Healthy U is made possible by a \$1 million grant from The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey.
- Healthy U is based on the Coordinated Approach to Child Health (CATCH) curriculum developed by the University of Texas Science Center School of Public Health. The CATCH curriculum is a national, award winning program with over 15-years of research documenting the program's success in reducing the rate of childhood obesity.
- Healthy U is an after-school program, administered by the New Jersey YMCA State Alliance which is comprised of 44 YMCA member Associations throughout New Jersey, and 359 YMCA sites. 42 YMCA member Associations will participate in Healthy U.
- Healthy U will be open to children ages 5-12 enrolled in YMCA after-school programs.
- Healthy U has three distinct components – Physical Education, Proper Nutrition and Parental Involvement.
  1. The physical education is evidence based and incorporates fitness, skill, competency and cognitive understanding about the importance of physical activity with an emphasis on non-elimination games and moderate-to-vigorous physical activity.
  2. The nutrition component teaches children how to identify, adopt and practice healthy eating habits. The program encourages changes in behavior that support healthy eating patterns.
  3. Parental involvement is an important component of the Healthy U program. Parents are informed of the program's objectives and encouraged to support their child's participation.

## **How Healthy U Works:**

- Forty-two YMCA staff members will be trained to implement the Healthy U Program. These 42 'Master Trainers' will teach local YMCA staff members to run the program at their locations.
- YMCA staff will collect baseline data and survey information annually. The University of Texas School of Public Health will evaluate and measure the impact of the Healthy U program.

**## More ##**

### About Childhood Obesity:

- Almost one-third of all children ages 6–19 are considered overweight or at risk for being overweight.
- According to the Institute of Medicine, there are 9 million children over the age of 6 who are obese. There is a 70 percent chance that an overweight adolescent will be overweight or obese as an adult.
- Studies show that as a result of diseases related to being overweight, children today may not live as long as their parents.
- Over the past 20 years, annual obesity-associated hospital costs for children have tripled.
- Being overweight negatively affects children’s relationships with their peers: they may have fewer friends or be subject to teasing, which has been linked with an increase in suicidal tendencies in overweight adolescents.
- Obesity is associated with diseases such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, depression, breast cancer and arthritis

### About The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey

*The Horizon Foundation for New Jersey promotes health and an improved quality of life across our state by supporting charitable community organizations. For more information about the Foundation visit [www.HorizonBlue.com/foundation](http://www.HorizonBlue.com/foundation).*

### About YMCAs

Today’s YMCAs serve **thousands** of U.S. communities, uniting **21 million** children and adults of all ages, races, faiths, backgrounds, abilities and income levels. Our reach and impact can be seen in the millions of lives we touch every year. Across the nation, YMCAs are committed to helping:

- **Children and youth** deepen positive values, their commitment to service and their motivation to learn
- **Families** build stronger bonds, spend time together and become more engaged with their communities
- **Individuals** strengthen their spiritual, mental and physical well-being

At every stage of life, YMCAs are there to help children, families and individuals reach their full potential.