

News Release

For Immediate Release

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Excellus BlueCross BlueShield selects Cayuga/Seneca Community Action Agency to receive Community Health Award

AUBURN, N.Y. — Excellus BlueCross BlueShield recently presented a \$4,000 grant to the Cayuga/Seneca Community Action Agency, which was selected from among nearly 80 Central New York applicants to receive one of the nonprofit health insurance company's 2015 Community Health Awards.

The Cayuga/Seneca Community Action Agency will use the money to fund a Head Start Backpack Program. The program will ensure that close to 200 backpacks filled with child-friendly, shelf-stable, healthy and easily consumable foods will be distributed to low-income children toward the end of every month, when the family's access to other food resources may be exhausted.

At the awards presentation, Arthur Vercillo, M.D., regional president, Excellus BlueCross BlueShield (pictured in the photo to the left), presented the grant to Marie Montgomery, deputy director, and Greg Hinman, board president, Cayuga/Seneca Community Action Agency.

Excellus BlueCross BlueShield presented its Community Health Awards as part of its mission to improve the health and health care of the residents of the communities it serves. Altogether, the company presented a total of \$25,000 in Community Health Awards to fund seven health programs offered by nonprofit organizations in Central New York.

The company's Community Health Awards are granted to Central New York institutions that positively influence the health of the community. Awards are made based on scope of need, goals of the program, number of people expected to benefit from the program and positive impact on the community's health status.

Six additional 501(c)(3) organizations in Excellus BlueCross BlueShield's eight-county Central New York region were selected to receive awards of up to \$4,000 each. They include:

- **Bike Walk Tompkins** at the Center for Transformative Action, Ithaca, for its Safe Routes to School Program. This initiative seeks to increase physical activity among youth by educating, encouraging and supporting children in their efforts to walk and bike to school. The goals of the community-based program are to improve youth biking and walking safety knowledge and skills.

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- **Clear Path for Veterans**, Chittenango, to offer five holistic Warrior Wellness Workshops for up to 20 participants each. Open to all veterans (targeted especially for those returning from service in Iraq and/or Afghanistan), each one-day workshop will provide camaraderie, health and wellness information focusing on integrative medicine modalities and a chance to relax in a serene setting. The organization serves veterans in 18 upstate New York counties, including those in the Central New York, Utica and Southern Tier regions.
- **Dairy Council Health Foundation**, North Syracuse, to implement Fuel Up To Play 60, a nationally recognized wellness program, at Dryden Middle School in Dryden. Designed to help curb the national obesity epidemic, the program motivates and empowers schoolchildren to make healthy food choices and incorporate 60 minutes of exercise into each day.
- **REACH CNY**, Syracuse, for its Cribs for Kids program in Oswego County. Partnering with the national Cribs for Kids program, the initiative focuses on preventable infant deaths (accidental suffocation and dangerous sleep environments). It will provide cribs and safe sleep education to low-income families in Oswego County.
- **St. Joseph's Hospital Health Center Foundation**, Syracuse, to establish three indoor walking routes that will be open to hospital visitors, patients, providers and employees. Targeting obesity and physical inactivity, the Foundation plans to mark, promote and provide incentives for individuals to use the walking routes that will traverse the main hospital campus with plans to expand the program to other locations in the future.
- **YWCA of Cortland** to support the organization's existing Model Moms educational support group for low-income mothers. Funds will be used to provide educational materials and supplies (including a Crock-Pot, food items and a calculator to use for budgeting purposes) to teach mothers how to cook healthy, nourishing meals for their families on a very limited budget.

"The company's Community Health Awards demonstrate a corporate commitment to support local organizations that share our mission as a nonprofit health plan," said Vercillo. "These awards complement our existing grants and sponsorships with agencies that work to enhance quality of life, including health status, in Central New York."

In the 75 years that Excellus BlueCross BlueShield has been serving residents of upstate New York, the company has supported hundreds of programs that are aimed at improving the health status of area residents.

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[Excellus BlueCross BlueShield](http://excellusbcbs.com), a nonprofit independent licensee of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association, is part of a family of companies that finances and delivers vital health care services to about 1.6 million people across upstate New York. Excellus BlueCross BlueShield provides access to high-quality, affordable health coverage, including valuable health-related resources that our members use every day, such as cost-saving prescription drug discounts and wellness tracking tools. To learn more, visit excellusbcbs.com.