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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### ***Building Healthy Communities* program celebrates 15 years of improving children's health in Michigan K-12 schools 148 schools participating in the program this school year**

**DETROIT, Oct. 5, 2023** —148 K-12 schools statewide teaching 62,334 students have been selected to participate in the [\*Building Healthy Communities \(BHC\)\*](#) program this school year. As the program celebrates its 15<sup>th</sup> year, over a half-million students have benefitted from physical and emotional health-focused improvements to the school environment led by *Building Healthy Communities*. Thirteen organizations, which are statewide leaders and experts on health and well-being, have partnered to reach 1,260 Michigan K-12 schools with the sustainable, evidence-based tools and resources offered by the program.

Michigan schools were invited to apply for one of three program options for the current school year. *Building Healthy Communities* offers multiple programs so schools can apply for the option that best meets their needs, including *BHC: Reducing Health Disparities in Elementary Schools* (grades K-5), *BHC: Engaging Middle Schools Through Project Healthy Schools* (grades 6-8) and *BHC: Step Up for School Wellness* (grades K-12).

This comprehensive programming aims to create healthier school environments and, in turn, reduce childhood obesity, prevent chronic disease, improve academic achievement and address mental health and well-being.

*Building Healthy Communities* has a proven history of improving the health of students who participate in the program, including:

- An increase in healthy foods consumed, with 40% more fruits and vegetables consumed than the national average.
- An increase in physical activity, including a 700-step increase per day and 35 additional minutes per week of moderate to vigorous physical activity.
- Increased academic achievement in math and reading, reporting 19 minutes less of screen and video time per day and 74% reported that it was easier to pay attention in class.
- Improved nutrition and physical activity behaviors are associated with sustained improvement in known cardiovascular risk factors.

*Building Healthy Communities* strives to reach Michigan schools across the state and especially those in critical need of support to meet the needs of students and staff around healthy eating, emotional well-being and physical activity. Of the 148 participating schools, 74% are in low-income, under-resourced communities in areas of great need across the state. Providing resources in areas of greatest need increases both the opportunity to address disparities and positively impact marginalized groups.

Launched in 2009, *Building Healthy Communities* is supported by multiple statewide organizations, including Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, Michigan Department of Education, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), Michigan Elementary and Middle School Principals Association (MEMSPA), Michigan Fitness Foundation, Michigan Recreation and Park Association, Michigan State University Extension, Michigan Virtual, OK2SAY, SHAPE Michigan, United Dairy Industry of Michigan, the University of Michigan and Wayne State University Center for Health and Community Impact.

“Over the last 15 years, the *Building Healthy Communities* program has been established as a positive force for change within Michigan K-12 schools,” said Ken Hayward, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan vice president and special assistant to the president for Community Relations. “Impacting over 538,000 students and 1,260 schools since *Building Healthy Communities* began, our evidence-based program provides students with the resources they need to make better nutritional choices, promote physical movement and regulate emotions – all of which are tools that will grow with children and create healthy, well-rounded adults in the future.”

“Supporting the health of our residents means also bringing resources to our youngest community members where and when they need them,” said Elizabeth Hertel, director, MDHHS. “Increasing access to healthy food choices and opportunities to be physically active in schools can help students attain and maintain a healthy mind and body, reduce risk of chronic disease and support academic achievement.”

“The *Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness* program is excited to be part of a well-being movement in Michigan schools that continues to positively impact the health behaviors of both students and staff. Year-after-year, the program results create enthusiasm and support among school administrators that encourages schools to sustain and further build a culture of well-being. MEMSPA is pleased to be a partner in this important work,” said Paul Liabenow, executive director of MEMSPA.

“United Dairy Industry of Michigan has been a longtime advocate for child nutrition and wellness initiatives and is proud to be a longtime partner with the Building Healthy Communities program. As our goals align, a foundation of nutrition education and ensuring dairy and other nutritious foods are accessible daily to our students can provide a life-changing impact,” said Brianna Henton, registered dietitian and health & wellness director at United Dairy Industry of Michigan.

“The sustained success of the *Building Healthy Communities* program is a testament to what happens when many committed organizations work together with aligned objectives,” said Dr. Nate McCaughtry, director for the

Center for Health and Community Impact and Assistant Dean of the Division of Kinesiology, Health and Sport Studies at Wayne State University. "In the elementary *Building Healthy Communities* program, we're proud to continue promoting health-enhancing physical activity, improving children's nutrition knowledge and habits, and creating a culture of wellness in schools. Our work aims to meaningfully address disparities that impact a child's health and social outcomes, leading to long-lasting impacts for families and communities."

"Project Healthy Schools is looking forward to our continued partnership with *Building Healthy Communities* for the 2023-2024 school year in our new middle schools across the state. The success of *Building Healthy Communities* as a program is a testament to all the organizations who continue to strive to create healthier school environments and improve health and academic outcomes for all Michigan students. As we continue to work in partnership to address the unique health challenges in Michigan schools, we are committed to providing the most beneficial program and resources for all participating schools. This year, we are thrilled to be expand our reach into school buildings and communities where we can continue to engage with students, teachers, staff and families through physical activity, nutrition, and social emotional knowledge and skill-based education," said Kim A. Eagle, MD, co-founder of Project Healthy Schools, Albion Walter Hewlett Professor of Internal Medicine Director, Frankel Cardiovascular Center.

"We at Michigan Virtual take pride in our partnerships with exceptional organizations to support the *Building Healthy Communities* program to enhance the well-being of students throughout Michigan," said Walt Sutterlin, senior director of Strategic Communications and Partnerships, Michigan Virtual.

"OK2SAY, Michigan's Student Safety Tipline, is pleased to be a part of *Building Healthy Communities* initiative which unites many organizations and interest groups with the goal of enhancing the safety and quality of life for children in Michigan," said Ms. Kim Root, section manager of the Office of School Safety in the Michigan State Police.

"Using Moderate to Vigorous Activity (MVPA) as a metric, teachers can gauge effectiveness of their programs and students can learn how to monitor their activity levels to optimize their performance. *Building Healthy Communities* provides equipment and training that has immediate impact in schools and influences long-term lifestyle choices among students," said Dr. Deb Berkey, Professor-Emerita, Western Michigan University and executive director of SHAPE-Michigan.

*Building Healthy Communities* supports Blue Cross' ongoing commitment to children's health and its #MIKidsCan campaign, an initiative focused on encouraging kids to adopt healthy habits and get active for at least 60 minutes every day. For more information on Blue Cross' ongoing efforts to help improve childhood health, visit [ahealthiermichigan.org/MIKidsCan](http://ahealthiermichigan.org/MIKidsCan).

**The schools receiving *Building Healthy Communities* programming for the 2023-2024 school year include:**

SCHOOL	DISTRICT	2023 Program
Alcona Middle School	Alcona Community Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Middle School Program
Ann J. Kellogg School	Battle Creek Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Arbor Academy	Arbor Academy	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Arcadia Elementary School	Kalamazoo Public School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Arrowwood Elementary School	Saginaw Township Community Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Ashley Elementary School	Ashley Community Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Auburn Elementary School	Bay City School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Avondale Middle School	Avondale School District	Building Healthy Communities: Middle School Program
Behavioral Education Center	Van Buren ISD	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Bellview Elementary School	Eastpointe Community Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Elementary School Program
Big Bay De Noc School	Big Bay De Noc School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Blissfield Middle School	Blissfield Community Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Middle School Program
Bowen Elementary	Kentwood Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Elementary School Program
Boyne Falls Public School	Boyne Falls Public School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Brandywine Elementary School	Brandywine Public School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Brandywine Middle School	Brandywine Public School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Brandywine Senior High School	Brandywine Public School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Brookwood Elementary	Kentwood Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Elementary School Program
Brown City Elementary School	Brown City Community Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Caledonia Elementary School	Caledonia Community Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Calumet High School	Public Schools of Calumet	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Caro Alternative Education	Caro Community Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Central Lake Elementary School	Central Lake Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Central Lake High School	Central Lake Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Challenger Elementary	Kentwood Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Elementary School Program
Charles C. McGlennen School	Clintondale Community Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Elementary School Program
Collins Elementary School	Houghton Lake Community Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Middle School Program
Colt Early Childhood Education Center	Waverly Community Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Elementary School Program

Columbia Central Jr. High School	Columbia School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Columbia Upper Elementary School	Columbia School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Crescentwood Elementary School	Eastpointe Community Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Elementary School Program
Delton Kellogg Elem. School	Delton-Kellogg School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Delton-Kellogg High School	Delton-Kellogg School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Delton-Kellogg Middle School	Delton-Kellogg School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Dexter High School	Dexter Community School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Discovery Elementary	Kentwood Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Elementary School Program
Dundee Elementary School	Dundee Community Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
East Leroy Elementary School	Athens Area Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Eastpointe Early Learning Center	Eastpointe Community Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Elementary School Program
Edison Environmental Science Academy	Kalamazoo Public School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Edmonson Elementary School	Lamphere Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
El Sol Elementary	Kalamazoo Public School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Elmwood School	Waverly Community Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Elementary School Program
Endeavor Elementary	Kentwood Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Elementary School Program
Ethel C. Bobcean Elem. School	Flat Rock Community Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Explorer Elementary	Kentwood Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Elementary School Program
Forest Park Elementary School	Eastpointe Community Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Elementary School Program
Fremont International Academy	Battle Creek Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Garfield Elementary School	Wyandotte Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Elementary School Program
Glenn W. Levey Middle School	Southfield Public School District	Building Healthy Communities: Middle School Program
Glenwood Elementary	Kentwood Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Elementary School Program
Greenfield Union Elementary School	Detroit Public Schools Community District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Greenwood Elementary School	Kalamazoo Public School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Greyhound Intermediate School	Eaton Rapids Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Hastings Middle School	Hastings Area School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
High Point School	Washtenaw ISD	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Hiller Elementary School	Lamphere Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Hillman Elementary School	Hillman Community Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness

Hillside Middle School	Kalamazoo Public School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Holland Heights Elementary School	Holland Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Elementary School Program
Holland Language Academy	Holland Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Elementary School Program
Homer Community High School	Homer Community Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Huron Academy: Utica Campus	Huron Academy	Building Healthy Communities: Middle School Program
Indian Prairie Elementary School	Kalamazoo Public School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Jefferson Elementary School	Holland Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Elementary School Program
Jefferson Elementary School	Wyandotte Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Elementary School Program
Jefferson Elementary School	Coldwater Community Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
John D. Pierce Middle School	Waterford School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
John M. Barnes Elem. School	Flat Rock Community Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Kalamazoo Central High School	Kalamazoo Public School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Kensington Woods High School	Kensington Woods High School	Building Healthy Communities: Middle School Program
King-Westwood Elementary School	Kalamazoo Public School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Lakewood High School	Lakewood Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Lakewood Middle School	Lakewood Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Lamphere Center	Lamphere Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Lamphere High School	Lamphere Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Lessenger Elementary School	Lamphere Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Lillian Fletcher Elem. School	Homer Community Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Lincoln International Studies School	Kalamazoo Public School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Linden Grove Middle School	Kalamazoo Public School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Loy Norrix High School	Kalamazoo Public School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Maple Street Magnet School for the Arts	Kalamazoo Public School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Mason Senior High School	Mason Consolidated Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Mattawan Later Elem. School	Mattawan Consolidated School	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Meadowlawn Elementary	Kentwood Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Elementary School Program
Merritt Elementary School	Brandywine Public School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Milan Middle School	Milan Area Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Milwood Elementary School	Kalamazoo Public School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness

Monroe Elementary School	Wyandotte Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Elementary School Program
Murphy Elementary School	Haslett Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Nah Tah Wahsh Public School Academy	Nah Tah Wahsh Public School Academy	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Newaygo County Career Tech Center	Newaygo County RESA	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
North Branch High School	North Branch Area Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Northeastern Elementary School	Kalamazoo Public School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Northglade Montessori School	Kalamazoo Public School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Page Middle School	Lamphere Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Parchment Middle School	Parchment School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Pardee School	Dearborn Heights School District 7	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Parkwood-Upjohn Elementary School	Kalamazoo Public School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Patterson Intermediate Learning Center	Tecumseh Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Pennfield North School	Pennfield School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Pennfield Purdy School	Pennfield School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Pershing High School	Detroit Public Schools Community District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Peterson-Warren Academy	Taylor School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Pine River Middle School	Pine River Area Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Pleasantview Elementary School	Eastpointe Community Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Elementary School Program
Portage Central High School	Portage Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Potterville Elementary School	Potterville Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Potterville High School	Potterville Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Potterville Middle School	Potterville Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Prairie Ridge Elementary School	Kalamazoo Public School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Prairieview School	Lakeview Sch. District (Calhoun)	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Pulaski Elementary-Middle School	Detroit Public Schools Community District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Rainbow Elementary School	Clintondale Community Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Elementary School Program
Reese High School	Reese Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Reese Middle School	Reese Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Robbie Hall Parker School	Clintondale Community Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Elementary School Program
Ronald Brown Academy	Detroit Public Schools Community District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness

Ross Park Elementary School	Mona Shores Public School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Shields Elementary School	Swan Valley School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Simonds Elementary School	Lamphere Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
South Lake Middle School	South Lake Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Southeastern Elementary School	Hastings Area School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Southwood Elementary	Kentwood Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Elementary School Program
Spring Valley Center for Exploration	Kalamazoo Public School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
St. Mary Parish School	Monroe Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Sunset Lake Elementary School	Vicksburg Community Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Swan Valley High School	Swan Valley School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
TCAPS Montessori School	Traverse City Area Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Thomas Simpson Middle School	Flat Rock Community Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Three Rivers Middle School	Three Rivers Community Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Townline Elementary	Kentwood Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Elementary School Program
Tri County Middle School	Tri County Area Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Middle School Program
Verona School	Battle Creek Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Washington Elementary School	Wyandotte Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Elementary School Program
Washington School	Bessemer Area School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Washington Writers' Academy	Kalamazoo Public School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Waverly East Intermediate School	Waverly Community Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Elementary School Program
Waverly Middle School	Waverly Community Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Waverly Senior High School	Waverly Community Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
West Elementary School	Holland Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Elementary School Program
West Elementary School	Lakewood Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Winans Elementary School	Waverly Community Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Elementary School Program
Winchell Elementary School	Kalamazoo Public School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Windemere Park Charter Academy	Windemere Park Charter Academy	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Woodland Elementary School	Lakewood Public Schools	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Woods Lake Elementary	Kalamazoo Public School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness
Woodward School For Technology & Research	Kalamazoo Public School District	Building Healthy Communities: Step Up for School Wellness

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*Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, a nonprofit mutual insurance company, is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. BCBSM provides health benefits to more than 4.7 million members residing in Michigan in addition to employees of Michigan-headquartered companies residing outside the state. The company has been committed to delivering affordable health care products through a broad variety of plans for businesses, individuals and seniors for more than 80 years. Beyond health care coverage, BCBSM supports impactful community initiatives and provides leadership in improving health care. For more information, visit [bcbsm.com](http://bcbsm.com) and [MiBluesPerspectives.com](http://MiBluesPerspectives.com).*