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Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Helps Make Minnesota Streets Places for People, Not Just Cars

Financial and technical support from the Center for Prevention will transform 10 communities' streets into avenues for activity at 27 Play Streets and Open Streets events

EAGAN, MINN. (May 14, 2014) – This summer, people in communities across Minnesota will have a chance to experience their streets as places for people, not just cars. The Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota (Blue Cross) is providing financial and technical assistance for 27 Play Streets and Open Streets events held in 10 communities in Minnesota this year. Blue Cross funding has grown to include new communities with new routes. Several communities are holding more than one event this year.

During Open Streets and Play Streets events, roads are temporarily closed to vehicle traffic to offer people of all abilities the chance to be on the street to walk, bike, play and connect with neighbors. The programs have different names in different communities, such as Open Streets, Ciclovias, Streets Alive, or Play Streets. Under any name, they are part of a larger effort to increase community connections, support local businesses, build demand for broader transportation choices, and encourage daily physical activity.

“Blue Cross is proud to support Open Streets and Play Streets initiatives to let people experience neighborhoods that are welcoming for biking and walking,” said Janelle Waldo, director of the Center for Prevention. “We’re excited to be a part of these events that help build demand for healthy communities where people of all ages and abilities can include physical activity in their daily lives.”

This year’s Open Streets and Play Streets events include:

May 17 – Winona: Play Streets, organized by Live Well Winona in collaboration with the Downtown Winona Main Street Program

May 31 – Minneapolis: North Minneapolis Greenway Experience – organized by Minneapolis Bicycle Coalition

May 23, July 25, Aug. 22 and Sept. 26 (Fridays), and June 8 (Sunday) – Spring Valley: Friday Family Bike Night, organized by City of Spring Valley

June 7 – Grand Rapids: Get Fit Gala: Open Streets, organized by Get Fit Itasca

June 8 – Minneapolis: Open Streets Lyndale Avenue South, organized by Minneapolis Bike Coalition

June 11, July 9, Aug. 13 – International Falls: Active Streets organized by Koochiching County Health Department

June 15 – Little Falls: Falls Festival on Foot organized by Healthy Communities Collaborative of Morrison County

June 26, July 12 and Aug. 21 – Buffalo: Buffalo Open Streets and Play Streets, organized by Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose Schools, City of Buffalo and Live Wright.

July 13, Aug. 24 – Moorhead: StreetsAlive!, organized by PartnerSHIP 4 Health and the Dakota Medical Foundation

July 13, Aug. 24 – Duluth: Lincoln Park Play Streets and Hillfest Play Streets, organized by the Zeppa Foundation

July 12 – St. Cloud: St. Cloud Open Streets, organized by St. Cloud Downtown Council and Alliance Foundation

July 27 – Minneapolis: Open Streets Central Avenue Northeast, organized by Minneapolis Bike Coalition

Aug. 17 – Minneapolis: Open Streets Franklin Avenue East, organized by Minneapolis Bicycle Coalition

Aug. 17 – Minneapolis: Phillips Music Festival and Play Streets organized by Pillsbury United Communities, Waite House

Sept. 14 – Minneapolis: Open Streets Nicollet Avenue organized by Lyndale Neighborhood Association with the Minneapolis Bicycle Coalition

Sept. 20 – Minneapolis: Open Streets Lowry Avenue North, organized by Minneapolis Bike Coalition

Sept. 21 – St. Paul: Open Streets University Avenue organized by St. Paul Smart Trips, St. Paul

About the Center for Prevention

The Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota delivers on Blue Cross' long-term commitment to improve the health of all Minnesotans by tackling the leading root causes of preventable disease: tobacco use, lack of physical activity and unhealthy eating. Funded through proceeds from Blue Cross' historic lawsuit against the tobacco industry, we collaborate with organizations statewide to increase health equity, transform communities and create a healthier state. Visit CenterForPreventionMN.com for more information.

About Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota (bluecrossmn.com), with headquarters in the St. Paul suburb of Eagan, was chartered in 1933 as Minnesota's first health plan and continues to carry out its charter mission today as a health company: to promote a wider, more economical and timely availability of health services for the people of Minnesota. Blue Cross is a not-for-profit, taxable organization. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, headquartered in Chicago.

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