

Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation Food as Medicine Grant Supports Fit4Kids' Learning Gardens and Healthy Eating for Greater Richmond Youth

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RICHMOND, Va.--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- The Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation recently funded Greater Richmond Fit4Kids' school-based Learning Gardens program with a \$75,000 grant as part of their Food as Medicine initiative. By combining garden tastings, cooking classes, seedling distribution, and surplus produce redistribution, this program strives to empower children to make healthier choices, foster a sustainable food culture, and create a positive impact in their schools' communities.

Fit4Kids is on-site this school year at 24 school gardens across Chesterfield, Henrico, Hopewell, and Richmond, Virginia. Prior to participating in Fit4Kids Learning Gardens, many students report never having tasted vegetables, such as squash, cauliflower, or snap peas. While participating in the program, students are exposed to many types of produce that positively influence their eating habits. Taking it a step further, Fit4Kids offers cooking classes that inspire creativity, encourage experimentation, and equip youth with lifelong skills for healthy eating. Meal kits are sent home after each class to support students' caregivers in their wellness journey.

The Anthem Foundation is also supporting Fit4Kids' greenhouse operations which provide more than 10,000 seedlings to families, community gardens, and more, encouraging them to grow their own veggies. This hands-on experience fosters a sustainable mindset and a stronger connection to their food.

To address food waste and insecurity, Fit4Kids will collect excess vegetables from local farms that would otherwise go to waste. These vegetables will be distributed to families in Fit4Kids programs, creating a community-driven

system that promotes access to fresh, nutritious produce while reducing waste and addressing hunger. According to Mary Dunne Stewart, Fit4Kids CEO, “Anthem continues to be a tremendous supporter of Fit4Kids’ mission to improve children’s health and wellness through physical activity and healthy eating. With their Food as Medicine grant, we are promoting food security and nutrition education in our community.”

This most recent grant builds on over a decade-long partnership between Anthem and Fit4Kids, bringing the Foundation’s total investment to over \$750,000 since 2012. Together, this partnership has resulted in an expansion of the Learning Gardens program from 6 to 24 sites. Since 2014, the number of students served each year in the Fit4Kids Learning Gardens has grown by more than 240%. Without Anthem’s longstanding support, this growth would not have been possible.

“Creating a love for growing, cooking, and eating healthy foods in children leads to healthier adults and healthier communities.” said Jennie Reynolds, Anthem HealthKeepers Plus President. “I love the way Fit4Kids addresses food insecurity in our communities with education and positive food experiences, paving the way for better choices as these students grow up.”

Greater Richmond Fit4Kids is a regional non-profit that is dedicated to improving children’s health and wellness through physical activity and healthy eating. For more information, please visit www.grfit4kids.org

About Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation

The Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation, an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, is a philanthropic arm of the Elevance Health Foundation. The Foundation works to address health equity by focusing on improving the health of the socially vulnerable through strategic partnerships and programs in our communities with an emphasis on maternal child health; mental health; and food as medicine. Additionally, the Foundation also responds to disasters when our communities need us the most. The Foundation coordinates the company’s year-round Dollars for Dollars program which provides a 100 percent match of associates’ donations, as well as its Volunteer Time Off and Dollars for Doers community service programs. ®ANTHEM is a registered trademark of Anthem Insurance Companies, Inc. The Blue Cross and Blue Shield names and symbol are registered marks of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. To learn more about the Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation and the Elevance Health Foundation, please visit www.elevancehealth.foundation and its blog at www.medium.com/elevancehealthfoundation.

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