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## PRESS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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### **Local Health Literacy Grants Made Available Through the Support of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida**

Orlando, FL , June 13, 2009:

Ten Adult ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) and Family Literacy programs across the state of Florida have been awarded one-year grants of \$5,000 each to establish a network of health literacy projects that will provide important information about health and nutrition while teaching English.

The Florida Health Literacy Grant Initiative, funded by **Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida, Inc.**, and operated by the **Florida Literacy Coalition, Inc.**, is a three-year commitment to improving the health literacy level of Florida residents by assisting literacy programs through financial as well as technical support. As part of the initiative, the Florida Literacy Coalition will be providing grantees with training opportunities, inter-agency collaboration facilitation, as well as resource sharing forums to build upon the strengths of each individual program.

There is growing recognition among health care providers and adult educators around the country that limited English language and literacy skills can have a significant impact on one’s health. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 14 percent of American adults have below basic health literacy skills. Low health literacy costs an estimated \$73 billion a year in the form of longer hospital stays, emergency room visits, increased doctor visits and increased medication.

“We very much appreciate Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida’s generous support and look forward to partnering on this effort,” said Greg Smith, Executive Director of the Florida Literacy Coalition. “Working in collaboration with local programs, this initiative will help adult learners throughout Florida to better navigate the medical system and make informed choices about their health and nutrition. The information and skills that they will acquire may very well be life changing. ”

Recipients of the grant awards for the 2009-2010 cycle include the following:

| ORGANIZATION          | COUNTIES SERVED           | CONTACT PERSON | PHONE          |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Adult Literacy League | Orange, Osceola, Seminole | Joyce Whidden  | (407) 422-1540 |

|   |               |                  |                        |
|---|---------------|------------------|------------------------|
| Manatee Technical Institute               | Manatee       | Linda Agresta    | (941) 751-7900 x. 2003 |
| TECO-ALCO                                 | Osceola       | Melissa Padgett  | (407) 344-5080         |
| South Florida Community College           | Highlands     | Nelly Ford       | (863) 784-7380         |
| Florida Community College in Jacksonville | Duval, Nassau | Loida Puno       | (904) 361-6350         |
| United Methodist Cooperative Ministries   | Pinellas      | Jan Setzekorn    | (727) 442-6881         |
| Haitian-American Organization for Women   | Dade          | Cuckita Bellande | (305) 245-8158         |
| Volunteers of America                     | Monroe        | Mary Casanova    | (305) 294-4352         |
| Literacy Volunteers of Lee County         | Lee           | Tess Murphy      | (239) 242-4374         |
| Palm Beach County Literacy Coalition      | Palm Beach    | Darlene Kostrub  | (561) 279-9103         |

### **About Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida**

Celebrating 65 years as Florida's leader in the health industry, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida is mission-driven to improve affordable access to health care. BCBSF is a not-for-profit, policyholder-owned, tax-paying mutual company. Headquartered in Jacksonville, Fla., BCBSF is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, an association of independent Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies. For more information concerning BCBSF, please visit [www.bcbsfl.com](http://www.bcbsfl.com) or to listen to Floridians speak out on health care issues visit [www.thepowerofthehumanvoice.com](http://www.thepowerofthehumanvoice.com).

### **About the Florida Literacy Coalition, Inc.**

Established in 1985, The Florida Literacy Coalition (FLC) promotes supports and advocates for the effective delivery of quality adult and family literacy services in the state of Florida. As a statewide umbrella literacy organization and the host of Florida's Adult and Family Literacy Resource Center, FLC provides a range of services to support more than 300 adult education, literacy and family literacy providers. Special emphasis is placed on assisting community based literacy organizations with their training and program development needs.

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