



For Immediate Release
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\$151,000 Grant from Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation Working to Reduce Preterm Births in Southeastern Wisconsin

Wheaton Franciscan-St. Joseph Foundation using funding to conduct outreach and provide early intervention to uninsured mothers

MILWAUKEE – Nov. 17, 2010 – Today, on Prematurity Awareness Day, the Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation (Anthem Foundation) announced a \$150,868 grant being used by the Wheaton Franciscan-St. Joseph Foundation to provide prenatal care to uninsured and low income mothers so that preterm births and other complications may be avoided.

“Within southeastern Wisconsin there are great disparities in prenatal care and infant mortality rates,” said Dr. Michael Jaeger, managing medical director for Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield in Wisconsin. “Through this grant we hope to engage uninsured and at-risk mothers early on so they get the care they need and have happy, healthy pregnancies.”

Two-thirds of the 4,200 mothers who deliver annually at Wheaton Franciscan-St. Joseph are low-income or uninsured individuals. The “Early Engagement Project” funded by the Anthem Foundation grant is an offshoot of Wheaton Franciscan’s Healthy Beginnings Initiative which seeks to reduce fetal and infant mortality rates in the communities the hospital serves.

In 2008, the Wheaton Franciscan-St. Joseph Emergency Department (ED) received more than 3,300 visits from over 2,000 low-income pregnant women. Of that number, almost 100 percent were uninsured, 14 percent visited the ED multiple times during their pregnancies, and many had a history of a stillbirth or preterm birth.

The ED is an inefficient and costly way to provide prenatal care. To correct this situation and improve birth outcomes, the Early Engagement Project engages pregnant women in prenatal care, with a particular focus on pregnant patients in their first trimester. Patients are guided to the Wheaton Franciscan-St. Joseph Women’s Outpatient Center (WOC) or other similar health care resource, and are provided assistance in finding insurance coverage through programs such as BadgerCare.

With the Anthem Foundation grant, the St. Joseph Foundation expects to increase the number of low-income, expectant mothers who engage in prenatal care within their first trimester by 250

(more)

persons, and increase the successful smoking cessation rate among pregnant patients at the WOC by 20 percent.

“We’re truly excited to continue our work with the Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation,” Mary Mazul, a certified nurse midwife with the Women’s Outpatient Center at St. Joseph said. “This grant will allow us to help 250 expectant mothers access high-quality prenatal care, which they would likely have otherwise gone without, putting their health and the health of their babies in danger. We thank the Anthem Foundation for its ongoing commitment to addressing health disparities and look forward to working with them throughout the term of this grant and on into the future.”

The two organizations have reason to be optimistic the program’s goals can be achieved.

A previous \$150,868 grant from the Anthem Foundation to the St. Joseph Foundation in 2009 was highly successful. Programs funded by the 2009 grant increased the rate of first-trimester care for uninsured women by 17 percent – surpassing the program’s goal of 10 percent. The program also increased awareness of the danger of tobacco use, engaged over 50 percent of pregnant smokers into a smoking cessation program, and improved breastfeeding rates.

“There are few things more important than making sure a new mother and baby get off to a healthy start, and there are few things that can be more costly than preterm births,” said Larry Schreiber, president of Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield in Wisconsin. “By connecting low income moms-to-be with prenatal services we can narrow health care disparities and reduce unnecessary health care costs. The result is that these women will receive more cost-effective care – and more importantly – better care than if they were to continue using emergency departments.”

About Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation

Through charitable grant making, the Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation LLC, an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, promotes Anthem’s inherent commitment to enhance the health and well-being of individuals and families in communities that Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield serves. The Foundation focuses its funding on strategic initiatives that address and provide innovative solutions to health care challenges, as well as promoting the Healthy Generations Program, a multi-generational initiative that targets specific disease states and medical conditions. These include: prenatal care in the first trimester, low birth weight babies, cardiac morbidity rates, long term activities that decrease obesity and increase physical activity, diabetes prevalence in adult populations, adult pneumococcal and influenza vaccinations and smoking cessation. The Foundation also coordinates the company’s annual associate giving campaign and its parent foundation provides a 50 percent match of associates’ campaign pledges.

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About Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield in Wisconsin

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About Wheaton Franciscan-St. Joseph Foundation

The Wheaton Franciscan – St. Joseph Foundation advances Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare’s mission by securing funds to sustain and enhance the exceptional health care services provided by St. Joseph, the second largest private hospital in Milwaukee, and at its outpatient centers: Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare – Wauwatosa and Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare-Brown Deer, part of the YMCA Healthy Lifestyle Village campus.

About Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare in Wisconsin

Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare (WFH) is a Catholic, not-for-profit organization with more than 100 health and shelter organizations in Wisconsin, Iowa, Colorado, and Illinois. Started by the Wheaton Franciscan Sisters more than 125 years ago and formally incorporated in 1983, WFH has corporate services offices in Wheaton, Illinois and Glendale, Wisconsin. In Southeast Wisconsin, WFH is co-sponsored by the Wheaton Franciscan and Felician Sisters and has nearly 11,000 associates, making it the second largest private employer in the area. Hospitals include All Saints in Racine County; Wheaton Franciscan - St. Joseph and The Wisconsin Heart Hospital Campuses, St. Francis, Franklin Hospital, and Midwest Orthopedic Specialty Hospital in Milwaukee County; and Elmbrook Memorial in Waukesha County. The region also includes Wheaton Franciscan Medical Group with more than 350 physicians in more than 50 locations, a network of outpatient centers, three transitional and extended care facilities, Home Health, and Hospice. Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare is also affiliated with Affinity Healthcare in the Fox Valley and United Hospital System in Kenosha.

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