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Florida Blue Awards More than \$300,000 to Support YMCA's Safety Around Water Programs Across Florida

Statewide grant to offer drowning prevention education to more than 5,000 youth

SOUTH FLORIDA – July 27, 2017 – To support the critical need of swim safety and drown prevention in Florida, four YMCA associations across the state announced today a donation of more than \$300,000 from health care leader Florida Blue. The support will provide free swim lessons and mobile aquatics programs for more than 5,000 children and families through the Y's *Safety Around Water* program. This donation benefits the YMCA of South Florida, YMCA of South Palm Beach County and YMCA of Florida's First Coast each with a \$100,000 grant. Additionally, Manatee YMCA will receive a \$10,000 donation.

As a leader in water safety and swim instruction, the Y's *Safety Around Water* program is designed to teach children how to reach the water's surface if submerged, safely reach the edge of a pool, exit any body of water and respond to unexpected water situations. The program also has a mobile component, where swim instructors travel communities to educate parents and children about the importance of water safety and provide swim lessons in neighborhoods. Research shows that participation in formal water safety and swim lessons can reduce the risk of drowning among children 1 to 4 years of age.

"The reality is accidental drowning is preventable and with the number of water activities available in South Florida, it's critical that we teach water safety and the need for swim lessons," said Sheryl Woods, YMCA of South Florida President and CEO. "Florida Blue understands this need and thanks to their generosity and support we're able to help make even more kids and families safer in and around water by teaching lifesaving skills that build confidence."

YMCA of South Palm Beach County President and CEO Jason Hagensick added, "According to the Florida Department of Health, Florida loses more children under the age of 5 to drowning, more than any other state in the country. With the support of key partners such as Florida Blue, the YMCA is hoping to help positively impact that statistic."

In recent years, Florida Blue has contributed more than \$700,000 to support various YMCA initiatives across the state of Florida, and has stayed actively involved in improving overall health and wellness for people of all ages and backgrounds.

"Every child should be able to safely explore and enjoy the water," said Florida Blue Market President Penny Shaffer. "With so many beaches, canals, lakes and pools in South Florida, learning to swim and to be safe around water is a community necessity."

Susan Towler, Florida Blue executive director of corporate social responsibility, has long been passionate about teaching water safety to children and their families. "Drowning is a preventable tragedy, and we have a responsibility to help parents understand the importance of teaching themselves and their children how to survive in water. Learning lifesaving water safety skills is a solution that helps ensure children can grow up strong and healthy."

The YMCA of South Palm Beach County and the YMCA of South Florida have provided swim lessons and water safety education to the South Florida community since the early 1900s. For more information about the Safety Around Water program, visit www.ymcaspbc.org or www.ymcasouthflorida.org.

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Photo: Florida Blue announces grant of more than \$310,000 for water safety and drowning prevention to YMCAs across Florida. The YMCA of South Florida and YMCA of South Palm Beach County received \$100,000 each. Pictured left to right are Jason Hagensick, CEO of the YMCA of Palm Beach County; Beth Johnston, Florida Blue; Ana Castellanos, Florida Blue; Doug Bartel, Senior Director of External Relations, Florida Blue; and Sheryl A. Woods, CEO of the YMCA of South Florida.

About the YMCA of South Palm Beach

The YMCA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit social services organization dedicated to Youth Development, Healthy Living, and Social Responsibility. It is a powerful association of men, women and children of all ages and from all walks of life dedicated to strengthening the foundations of community. The YMCA of South Palm Beach County is comprised of: The Peter Blum Family YMCA of Boca Raton, The DeVos-Blum Family YMCA of Boynton Beach, The Schmidt Family YMCA Preschool at the Volen Center and the YMCA@901 NCCI. For more information, please visit www.ymcaspbc.org.

About the YMCA of South Florida

The Y is a leading nonprofit committed to strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. Every day, the Y works hard to build healthy, confident, connected and secure children, adults, families and communities through over 200 afterschool, preschool, special needs, sports, camp and youth programs, family centers, and senior health outreach sites. To learn more, visit www.ymcaofsouthflorida.org, connect on Facebook or Twitter, or call a Y near you.

About Florida Blue

Florida Blue, Florida's Blue Cross and Blue Shield company, is a leader in Florida's health care industry. Its mission is to help people and communities achieve better health. Florida Blue serves more than 5 million health care members, and nearly 18 million people in 12 states are served through its affiliated companies. Headquartered in Jacksonville, Fla., it 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, visit www.FloridaBlue.com.