



PRESS RELEASE

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R.I. Community Food Bank Expands its *Raising the Bar on Nutrition* Program with Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island Grant

Funding will Bring Nutrition Education Program to Jonnycake Center in Peace Dale

PROVIDENCE, R.I. Nutrition education, particularly the benefits of an increased intake of fruits and vegetables, has been promoted for years with little impact on the diets of low-income households. In response, *Raising the Bar on Nutrition*, an innovative and hands-on program developed by Mary Flynn, Ph.D., RD, LDN, Supervisor and Chief Research Dietitian at The Miriam Hospital and Assistant Professor of Medicine at Brown University, has shown promise in helping low-income families eat better for less.

Thanks to a Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island BlueAngel Community Health Grant of \$25,000, the Rhode Island Community Food Bank is expanding its *Raising the Bar on Nutrition* program to the Jonnycake Center in South County.

Limited financial resources make low-income families at double risk for hunger and obesity. Strong evidence supports an association between poverty, food insecurity and obesity with low-income families being at highest risk. These families tend to consume more refined carbohydrates, sugar and fat, typically because they are the least expensive calorie options available. *Raising the Bar on Nutrition* introduces healthy, low-cost meals into the participants' diet to promote better weight control and improve nutrition.

"A healthy diet includes vegetables every day, but does not need to contain meat, which is typically the most expensive part of a family's grocery bill," commented Dr. Mary Flynn. "The goal of *Raising the Bar on Nutrition* is to show people that eating healthy can be easy, taste great and be low in cost. People that have gone through the program are spending less money on their groceries and losing weight," finished Flynn.

"At Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island, we have a responsibility to our community," stated Linda H. Newton, vice president of Community Relations, CSR and Diversity at Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island. "Improving the health of Rhode Islanders, through education and the promotion of a healthy lifestyle, strengthens our state and builds a healthier community."

Beginning this month, *Raising the Bar on Nutrition* will be offered at the Peace Dale Jonnycake Center. Over the course of the next twelve months, eight classes will be offered to food pantry clients and each class will last six weeks. Individuals that take part in the program will also participate in a four-week pre-intervention study and six-month follow-up to measure the success of the program and evaluate whether participants adopted a healthier diet.

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Each class involves the cooking demonstration of a healthy, low-cost, meal for a family of four. Participants are given an opportunity to sample the prepared recipe and receive nutrition information, additional recipes and the ingredients needed to re-create the meal at home. In a follow-up survey to the program's pilot, 15 of 16 participants reported significantly changing their eating habits and consuming more fruits and vegetables.

Currently, the Rhode Island Community Food Bank is feeding more than 40,000 Rhode Islanders each month through a network of 285 certified member agency programs. Additionally, nearly 11% of all Rhode Islanders, representing 115,000 people, are at risk of going hungry.

The Rhode Island Community Food Bank is a non-profit organization located in Providence, RI. The Food Bank solicits, stores and distributes food products donated by supermarkets, wholesalers, food processors, local farmers and community food drives. The food is then distributed to the Food Bank's network of 285 member agencies. In the past fiscal year, the Food Bank distributed 8.3 million pounds of food. For more information about the Food Bank, please visit www.rifoodbank.org

Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island has been the state's leading health insurer for 70 years and now covers more than 600,000 members. Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. For more information, please visit www.bcbsri.com.

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