



**ANTHEM BLUE CROSS FOUNDATION
TACKLES CHILDHOOD OBESITY IN THE BOYLE HEIGHTS, HUNTINGTON PARK AREAS BY
FUNDING THE MEND 7-13 PROGRAM, A 10-WEEK HEALTHY LIFESTYLE PROGRAM**

***Programs will be available at Weingart East Los Angeles YMCA and Southeast-Rio Vista
YMCA and are free of charge to families***

Los Angeles, CA (Sept. 30 2011) – The Weingart East Los Angeles YMCA, The Southeast-Rio YMCA and the MEND Foundation, an independent non-profit organization dedicated to improving family health and fitness, today announced an important \$100,000 grant from Anthem Blue Cross Foundation.

The support will help families living in the Boyle Heights and Huntington Park neighborhoods of East Los Angeles gain access to a program that is proven to help communities tackle the challenge of obesity. The funding that the MEND (Mind Exercise Nutrition Do it!) 7-13 Program receives allows its programs to be free of charge to participants.

Offered after school at the Weingart East Los Angeles YMCA and Southeast-Rio YMCA, MEND 7-13 is a 10 week weight management course for overweight and obese children. Geared towards elementary and middle school age children aged between 7 and 13 years old and their families, the MEND 7-13 Program has already achieved success in numerous diverse communities in Texas, California, Colorado, New York and Washington, D.C. as well as internationally where it began and will soon debut in Chicago and North Carolina as well.

A press conference will be held at the Weingart East Los Angeles YMCA at 11 am on Wednesday, October 5 to:

- Highlight Anthem's gracious support and their decision to fund this program
- Explain the potential impact a MEND 7-13 program has within communities facing growing health concerns related to childhood obesity
- Offer live interviews with children and their families that have already benefitted from the MEND 7-13 program

- Showcase details of the programs and the Y facilities
- Explain how families in the community can enroll to participate

Despite increasing public awareness of this issue, according to the latest National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), an estimated 16.9% of children and adolescents aged 2-19 years in the United States are obese.

“Obesity is a growing health concern for our children, and it is important to help set them on a path to good health as early as possible,” said Pam Kehaly, president of Anthem Blue Cross. “Evidence-based programs like MEND help families recognize and respond to the danger of obesity. By offering this kind of program to disadvantaged communities, MEND is positioned to help those with the greatest need and in so doing can affect positive change for our children’s future.”

Victor Dominguez, Executive Director of both Y locations offering the MEND programs in East Los Angeles said, “Our Y’s provide an ideal environment for a healthy lifestyle intervention program like MEND. Children and their families are familiar with the Y and we have a long history of providing quality health and fitness programs for children and their families.”

Note to editors: The Weingart East Los Angeles YMCA and The Southeast Rio YMCA will begin new sessions of MEND 7-13 programs in October. Interested community members can contact Raquel Delgado, Healthy Lifestyle Director, Weingart East Los Angeles YMCA, and Southeast Rio YMCA Tel: 323-260-7005 x 7417 for registration information.

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About The MEND Foundation

Established in 2008, the MEND Foundation is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to inspire children, families and adults to lead and sustain fitter, healthier and happier lives – with a focus on changing the behaviors that cause overweight and obesity. Its vision is to promote health equity and reduce child obesity through innovation, partnership and practical action. MEND fulfills its vision by supporting the implementation of the MEND (Mind, Exercise Nutrition, Do it!) Program, an evidence-based obesity prevention and intervention program for low-income, underinsured families in underserved communities free of charge through grant funding and public-private partnerships. Over 30,000 people in 6 countries are already benefitting from attending a MEND Program. MEND 7–13 is currently being run in diverse communities across the US, in partnership with YMCAs and other community-based organizations. In the MEND 7-13 Program, children and their families learn how to develop behaviors that support sustainable, healthy lifestyles for the entire family. The MEND 7–13 Program is evidenced based, and solutions-driven to overcome childhood obesity. Following the 10-week intensive program, participants are introduced to MEND World, a self-directed maintenance

phase that helps families continue the healthy eating and physical activity behaviors they achieved while on the Program. The MEND 7-13 Program takes place twice a week for 10 weeks, with an ultimate goal of helping local children and their families take control of their lives and become fitter, healthier and happier. The collaboration of Anthem allows the MEND Foundation to provide the YMCA with all the resources, training and curriculum needed to offer the program. The Y is then able to engage their community members with these purpose-driven programs to help sustain healthy behavior changes at their locations. For more information, go to www.mendfoundation.org.

About Anthem Blue Cross Foundation

Through charitable grant making, Anthem Blue Cross Foundation LLC, an independent licensee of the Blue Cross Association promotes Anthem Blue Cross's inherent commitment to enhance the health and well-being of individuals and families in communities that the company 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. ® ANTHEM is a registered trademark of Anthem Insurance Companies, Inc. The Blue Cross names and symbol are registered marks of the Blue Cross Association.

About the Y

The Weingart East Los Angeles YMCA and Southeast-Rio Vista YMCA dedicate themselves to improving the lives of area youth through quality programming. The Y has provided a diverse community with values-based programs that foster positive life choices and the building of interpersonal bridges. The Y is one of the Los Angeles area's leading nonprofit associations strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. Across the East Los Angeles and Southeast Los Angeles communities the Y engages men, women and children – regardless of age, income or background – to nurture the potential of children and teens, improve the community health and well-being, and provides opportunities to give back and support neighbors. The Y has the long-standing relationships and physical presence not just to promise, but to deliver, lasting personal and social change.

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