



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contacts:

Lillian McDonald, ECHO, 651.789.4342 / McDonald@echominnesota.org

Karen Lyons, Blue Cross, 651.662.1415 / Karen_M_Lyons@bluecrossmn.com

New TV Program on Obesity's Health Risks Offered in Seven Languages

St. Paul, Minn. (April 4, 2011) – In response to rising obesity trends nationally and in Minnesota, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota (Blue Cross) and Emergency, Community and Health Outreach (ECHO) have teamed up to bring Minnesotans a new, 20-minute television program called “Obesity and Your Health.” With more than two-thirds of Minnesota adults either overweight or obese, and many low-income and racial or ethnic groups suffering disproportionately from obesity and its related health conditions, the program is available in seven languages: low-literacy English, Hmong, Khmer, Lao, Somali, Spanish and Vietnamese.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, the annual health care cost of obesity in the U.S. is estimated to be as high as \$147 billion a year. Minnesota's obesity-related health care costs have been estimated at more than \$1.3 billion. Blue Cross projects that Minnesota's obesity-related health care costs could increase to more than \$5 billion annually by 2020 if steps aren't taken to slow the rate of obesity.

“More than 2 million adult Minnesotans are overweight or obese and at risk for serious and costly diseases or conditions such as heart disease, diabetes and some cancers. And obesity rates are even higher among certain communities in Minnesota,” said Marc Manley, M.D. and Chief Prevention Officer for Blue Cross. “These are staggering numbers, which is why we're working to increase awareness and encourage Minnesotans to move more and eat better. These unique television programs are just one example of how we are working to address health inequities in our state and improve the health of all Minnesotans.”

Both ECHO and Blue Cross hope these newly created television programs will find their way into the toolkits of health educators, nonprofits, employers and government organizations that are involved with many pivotal projects to reduce obesity.

The program will air on the *tptMN* channel Sundays at 7 p.m. in May and is available any time at echominnesota.org. Each show features experts from the related community and discussions are culturally tailored. In addition to learning about the illnesses in children and adults that can be caused by obesity, viewers will learn how to eat healthy food on a tight budget, fit physical activity into daily routines and connect with helpful resources. At its core, the program focuses on helping people make lifestyle choices that could enhance their health and prevent serious diseases.

Schedule* for “Obesity and Your Health” on *tptMN*:

May 1 at 7:00 p.m. in Spanish – Host: Morgan Michilot; Guest: Dr. Jose Castellanos

May 1 at 7:20 p.m. in Hmong – Host: Mao Thao; Guest: Thomas Yang

(-more-)

May 1 at 7:40 p.m. in Somali – Host: Zuhur Ahmed; Guest: Dr. Ismail Mualin

May 8 at 7:00 p.m. in Vietnamese – Host: Elisa Le; Guest: Huy Bui

May 8 at 7:20 p.m. in Lao – Host: Khambay Sivongsay; Guest: Monemany Daoheuang

May 8 at 7:40 p.m. in Cambodian – Host: Henry Ung; Guest: Rom Touy

May 15 at 7:00 p.m. in low-literacy English – Host: Lillian McDonald; Guest: Linda Fancher

* All programs are available any time in multiple languages with English captions at echominnesota.org.

###

About the Organizations:

ECHO

Formed in 2004, the mission of ECHO is to leverage partnerships to deliver vital health, safety, emergency and civic engagement information to help the ever-changing, diverse population integrate and become successful in our communities. For more information visit www.echominnesota.org

***Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota**, with headquarters in the St. Paul suburb of Eagan, was chartered in 1933 as Minnesota's first health plan and continues to carry out its charter mission today as a health company: to promote a wider, more economical and timely availability of health services for the people of Minnesota. Blue Cross is a not-for-profit, taxable organization. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, headquartered in Chicago. Go to bluecrossmn.com to learn more about Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota.*