



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Simply Healthcare Foundation's Support Creates Opportunities for Miami Lighthouse for the Blind Teenage Students to Join National Fitness Challenge and Live Actively

Grant enables Miami Lighthouse for the Blind to become one of only 17 organizations nationwide to participate in National Fitness Challenge for teenagers with visual disabilities

MIAMI – Miami Lighthouse for the Blind has received a grant from Simply Healthcare Foundation to create opportunities for individuals to participate in the National Fitness Challenge, an initiative founded by the United States Association of Blind Athletes and the parent Foundation of Simply Healthcare Foundation. Miami Lighthouse will be using grant funding to offer adaptive yoga classes, walking groups, running clinics and other sports and fitness activities that can help people who are blind or low-vision maximize healthy lifestyles. These activities will be offered over the course of eight months to help teenagers increase physical fitness levels and live healthier lives.

One upcoming activity will take place at Arch Creek Park located at 1855 NE 135th St, North Miami, where blind teenage students will participate in an archaeology history walk on Saturday, February 2nd 2019 from 10:00am-12:00pm. The two-hour program is a naturalist guided walk where the students will hear about the history of the Tequesta's, a native American tribe, that once inhabited the area. They will also have the opportunity to excavate artifacts at the Arch Creek Park mock dig site and have the opportunity to make pinch pots during a pottery session.

"This is an opportunity to focus on ability, not disability," said Miami Lighthouse President and CEO Virginia Jacko. "A blind person can do almost anything a sighted person does including living an active lifestyle and that is what we teach at Miami Lighthouse for the Blind, that 'It's Possible to See Without Sight™'."

This year's challenge integrates technology and social media to inspire participants to set goals, create team environments and encourage leadership. Each participant has been provided with a Fitbit Flex 2 wearable – a universal way to measure activities, calories burned and number of steps taken. Participants also have the opportunity to utilize Fitbit Coach, which is a personalized training app that provides adaptive video workouts and audio coaching. Foundation grant funding is being used to provide Fitbits, fitness and nutritional instruction, performance prizes as well as technical and financial support for all participants.

"Simply is proud to support members of the Miami Lighthouse for the Blind through our collaboration with the National Fitness Challenge and to create access to activities supporting healthier individuals and stronger communities," said Lourdes Rivas, Simply Healthcare Medicaid Plan President. "These programs are incredibly valuable to consumers and members of the community because individuals who participate in regular physical activity have higher energy levels, lower risk of health-related diseases, improved psychological health and lower rates of depression and anxiety."



More than half of those who are blind or low vision in the United States do not participate in any form of physical fitness, mostly due to barriers to accessible fitness or misconceptions about their abilities. Individuals of all abilities should have equal opportunities to engage in activities that improve health outcomes, so the National Fitness Challenge aims to increase access to fitness and health for blind and low vision people.

“The Simply Healthcare Foundation continues to empower and inspire youth and adults across the nation who are blind and visually impaired by supporting the National Fitness Challenge,” said Mark Lucas, executive director of USABA. “We are honored and excited to once again partner with the Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation to cultivate healthier communities.”

Since 2011, the parent Foundation of Simply Healthcare has provided \$1.3 million in grant funding to U.S. Association of Blind Athletes for the National Fitness Challenge initiative and has impacted thousands of Americans with visual disabilities by partnering with 40 different agencies across the country. To learn more about the National Fitness Challenge, visit www.usaba.org/NationalFitnessChallenge.

ABOUT MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE FOR THE BLIND

Founded in 1931 as the Florida Association of Workers for the Blind, Miami Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired has changed more than just its name during its nearly 90-year history as Florida’s premier rehabilitation organization serving the blind. Miami Lighthouse now serves over 17,000 people each year and reaches an additional 3,300 through community education and outreach programs. The mission of Miami Lighthouse for the Blind is to provide vision rehabilitation, eye health services and education that promote independence, to collaborate with and train professionals, and to conduct research in related fields. For more information go to www.miamilighthouse.org

ABOUT SIMPLY HEALTHCARE FOUNDATION

Simply Healthcare Foundation is a philanthropic arm of Anthem, Inc. Together, with local, regional and national organizations, Simply Healthcare Foundation works to enhance the health and well-being of individuals and families in communities that Anthem and its affiliated health plans serve. Simply Healthcare Foundation funding is focused on strategic initiatives working to address and provide innovative solutions to health care challenges, as well as promoting the Healthy Generations Program, a multi-generational initiative with five areas of focus: Healthy Heart, Cancer Prevention, Healthy Maternal Practices, Type 2 Diabetes Prevention, and Healthy Active Lifestyle. These disease states and medical conditions 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.

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