GOVERNOR’S COUNCIL SHINES SPOTLIGHT ON STATE’S NEWEST FITNESS CHAMPIONS

Governor Launches 4th Annual Fitness Challenge for Schools

Sacramento – The gold medal winners of the 2009 Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports Spotlight Awards presented by the Anthem Blue Cross Foundation were announced by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and Council Chairman Jake Steinfeld Wednesday, September 16, at an awards ceremony at the Capitol Area East End Complex Auditorium in Sacramento. The Spotlight Awards recognize the efforts of principals, teachers, non-profit organizations, events, park programs, parent associations and schools that positively impact the physical activity, fitness levels and well being of California children. The grand prize winning schools and other Spotlight Award Gold Medalists were selected from over 700 nominees based on their use of innovation, inspiration and initiative to positively impact the physical activity, fitness levels and well being of California children and youth.

“I congratulate all of this year’s Gold Medal winners including the three grand prize winning schools of my Fitness Challenge,” Governor Schwarzenegger said. “This year participation doubled with a record 339,000 students, teachers and parents who took my Fitness Challenge, and I’m proud of each and every one of them for their fantastic efforts. It’s Californians like them who will help make us the strongest and healthiest state in the country.” The Governor announced that this year’s Governor’s Challenge Competition among California’s K-12 schools will run from September 17, 2009 to May 31, 2010.

Rancho Las Positas Elementary School (Livermore), Bobby Duke Middle School (Coachella) and Warren High School (Downey) were announced as the Council’s Elementary School of the Year, Middle School of the Year and High School of the Year respectively, and the winners of the 2009 Governor’s Challenge Competition. The three schools, which will each receive brand new fitness activity centers valued at $100,000, were selected from 1,165 schools and more than 330,000 students that engaged in physical activity 30-60 minutes a day, at least 3 days a week for 4 weeks during the previous school year.
The Governor was joined in his praise of the winners by Council Chairman Jake Steinfeld, founder of Major League Lacrosse and Exercise TV. Also joining them was Anthem Blue Cross Foundation, a founding sponsor of the Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports and presenting sponsor of the Spotlight Awards. Anthem Blue Cross Foundation has granted more than $1.75 million to the Council over the last 5 years.

“We’re proud to shine a spotlight on each of our awardees because they are each doing something amazing to help California’s children. It’s especially heartwarming to know that the students at Rancho Las Positas Elementary School have decided to donate their $100,000 brand new fitness center to another deserving elementary school in a community of greater need. For a group of kids to be that generous is absolutely fantastic and renews my optimism for the future of this great state” said Steinfeld.

In addition to announcing the 9 Spotlight Award gold medalists, Steinfeld also gave special recognition to eleven school districts and the Stanislaus County Office of Education for their support of children’s fitness. “Stanislaus County led the way in participation in the Governor’s Challenge last year with over 100,000 students recording more than a million active days. Students in the County’s top performing schools in the Governor’s Challenge had more than twice the rate of improvement in English and Math than the rest of the state this year showing that physical activity not only increases students’ health, confidence and self-esteem, it can help students academically too.”

“Anthem Blue Cross Foundation recognizes the benefits of physical fitness as part of a healthy lifestyle,” said Leslie A. Margolin, president of Anthem Blue Cross of California. “As the Presenting Sponsor of the Spotlight Awards, the foundation is delighted to be supporting efforts to instill the importance of wellness in the children of our state. We’re also thrilled to announce today that the foundation is continuing as a major sponsor of the Governor’s Council and the sole sponsor of the Spotlight Awards in 2010 with an additional investment of nearly $375,000.”

Research shows that regular physical activity during childhood and adolescence helps build healthier bones and muscles, increases self-esteem, and reduces the risk of obesity and type 2 diabetes.

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has been a leader in preventing childhood obesity and encouraging all Californians to live healthier. Since taking office, the Governor has:

- Increased fresh fruits and vegetables in our schools.
- Banned junk food and soda from schools.
- Banned trans fats and foods fried in unhealthy oils from schools.
- Increased funding for physical education classes and equipment for our schools.
- Held an obesity summit to raise awareness and get families involved.

(more)
2009 Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports Spotlight Awards
Presented by the Anthem Blue Cross Foundation
Gold Medalists and other Honorees:

Principal – Rick Oser, Golden Avenue Elementary, Lemon Grove
Teacher – George Velarde, Sierra Vista Junior High, Canyon Country
Non-Profit Organization – Trips for Kids, Mill Valley
Event – California Kids Triathlon, Woodland
Park and Recreation Program – Westside Steppers Drill Team & Drum Squad -City of San Bernardino
Parent Association – Monroe Elementary School Parent Teacher Association, Santa Barbara
Schools – Rancho Las Positas Elementary School, Livermore
- Bobby Duke Middle School, Coachella
- Warren High School, Downey
County of the Year – Stanislaus County
School Districts of the Year –
Bay Area – Redwood City School District
Central Coast – Pajaro Valley Unified School District
Central Valley – Delano Union School District
Desert Sierra – Etiwanda School District
Gold Coast – Oak Park Unified School District
Gold Country – Manteca Unified School District
Los Angeles – Monrovia Unified School District
North Coast – Petaluma City Elementary School District
Orange County – Buena Park School District
San Diego and Imperial – Chula Vista Elementary School District
Sierra Cascade – Fall River Joint Unified School District

A full listing of the gold, silver and bronze medalists, plus the eleven regional award winning schools in the 2009 Governor’s Challenge Competition can be found at www.CalGovCouncil.org

About the Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports
The California Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to promoting physical activity for all Californians with an emphasis on children and youth. Governor Schwarzenegger is the Honorary Chairman and Council members include Chairman Jake Steinfeld, Vice Chairman Peter Vidmar, and California sports legends such as Tony Hawk, Laila Ali, Misty May-Treanor, and Jerry Rice. Governor’s Council Key Initiatives include the Governor’s Challenge, the Governor’s Council Spotlight Awards Presented by Anthem Blue Cross Foundation, the Governor’s Council Activity Guide, the Live Like a Champion Tour powered by Anthem Blue Cross and Exercise is Medicine. Founding sponsors are the Anthem Blue Cross Foundation, and Kaiser Permanente. For more information visit www.CalGovCouncil.org.

About the Anthem Blue Cross Foundation
Through charitable grant making, the Anthem Blue Cross Foundation LLC, an independent licensee of the Blue Cross Association promotes Anthem Blue Cross’ 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. To learn more about the Anthem Blue Cross Foundation please visit www.wellpointfoundation.org.

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