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NEWS RELEASE

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Colorful Playground Just a Hop, Skip and a Jump Away

Gates County awarded grant to update outdoor spaces and increase healthy activity

Gatesville, N.C. – Gates County Community Center recently received a grant to transform a public area into an imaginative space for families to play and be active outdoors. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina (BCBSNC) and the North Carolina Recreation and Park Association (NCRPA) are supporting healthier communities by installing PlayPrints across the state.

PlayPrints are ground markings, or colorful shapes and games that are painted on existing pavement. The bright colors and interactive designs are meant to encourage visitors to take part in more physical activity. Community agencies across North Carolina were invited to apply.

“Receiving a PlayPrints grant at the Gates County Community Center is a helpful step as we continue to grow healthy and active opportunities in our community”, said Lulu Eure, Community Center Director. “Visitors will have new creative ways to engage with our public space and have fun participating in physical activity outdoors.”

Any child that plays on the playground will have access to the prints and encouraged to utilize them. Between 135 to 145 youth play fall and spring soccer, 60 to 80 play youth football, and 220-250 play youth basketball. If you consider these children plus siblings that may use the playground, many will have access to the PlayPrints. Britches and Braids, a pre-school program that operates at the Community Center, would also be able to use the prints when in session. An average of 15 to 20 children attend the program. The high school baseball, football, and softball fields are adjacent to the Community Center. This allows many children access to not only the Community Center playground but also the PlayPrints. Those who walk also have access to the playground and PlayPrints.

“We want to promote healthy habits at an early age and make it fun for North Carolinians to get outside and get active with their families,” said Kathy Higgins, vice president of corporate affairs at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina. “PlayPrints are a simple way to take existing outdoor spaces in our communities and transform them into a center for healthy activity and imaginative play.”

Over the next two years, PlayPrints will be popping up at open play spaces as part of BCBSNC's Get Outside North Carolina! (GO NC!) program. Go NC! builds healthy and active lifestyles through the advancement of greenway systems, increased access to public bicycles and the overall promotion of outdoor physical activity.

"Providing fun and creative avenues to engage our communities by adding PlayPrints to our parks and greenways is an exciting way to encourage citizens of all ages to have a little fun while increasing physical activity," said Michelle Wells, executive director at NCRPA.

For a complete list of PlayPrints recipients and to follow progress as PlayPrints are installed throughout the state visit www.NCRPA.net/PlayPrints or follow @NCRPA @BCBSNC or #PlayPrints on Twitter and Facebook.

About Gates County Community Center:

The Gates County Community Center was built in 1978 by a joint effort between the Gates County Board of Education and Gates County Board of Commissioners. The building and land are owned by Gates County. The facility and activities are operated by Gates County Board of Education.

About Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina:

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina improves the health and well-being of our customers and communities by providing innovative health care products, services and information to more than 3.91 million members, including approximately 1 million served on behalf of other Blue Plans. Since 1933, we have worked to make North Carolina a better place to live through our support of community organizations, programs and events that promote good health. We have been recognized as one of the World's Most Ethical Companies by Ethisphere Institute every year since 2012. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. Visit BCBSNC online at bcbsnc.com. All other marks are the property of their respective owners.

About the North Carolina Recreation & Park Association:

Founded in 1944, the North Carolina Recreation & Park Association (NCRPA) is the premier nonprofit education and advocacy organization, dedicated to the advancement of the park, recreation and leisure professions in our state. NCRPA empowers park and recreation professionals and citizen board members through educational opportunities that enhance their ability to change lives and impact communities on a daily basis for the citizens of North Carolina. For an overview of the programs and services offered by the organization, visit www.ncrpa.net.

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