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**BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD OF ARIZONA CHALLENGES  
NEARLY 43,000 ARIZONA CHILDREN TO *WALK ON!***

What has more than 48,000 legs and has walked more than 7.6 billion steps (equivalent to 145 times around the Earth)? The more than 24,000 fifth-grade students who have completed Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona's (BCBSAZ) *Walk On!* Challenge since its inception in 2006.

*Walk On!* is an innovative school-based program designed to motivate kids in grades K-8 statewide to incorporate exercise into their daily routines throughout the school year. The *Walk On!* Challenge component challenges fifth-graders statewide to compete for prizes by completing 10,000 steps every day in February.

Now in its fourth year, *Walk On!* will have its largest turnout ever, with nearly 43,000 fifth graders in 130 school districts statewide taking the challenge. BCBSAZ is giving each student a pedometer and chart to track the number of steps taken each day, and students who meet the 10,000 step-a-day *Walk On!* Challenge are eligible for prizes such as a Wii Fit™ or iPod® shuffle. Additionally, the school with the highest percentage of fifth-grade students to complete the Challenge will receive a \$2,500 grant for a special fitness-oriented activity.

"We've seen the rates of childhood obesity spike sharply over the last several years in both Arizona and the United States as a whole," said Richard L. Boals, president and chief executive officer of BCBSAZ. "We hope that through the *Walk On!* program, we can instill in Arizona's children healthy habits that help them stay active into adulthood."

Participation in the *Walk On!* program has increased rapidly since its first year in which more than 3,000 students completed the *Walk On!* Challenge. More than 10,000 participated in 2007 and more than 11,000 students participated in 2008.

**About Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona**

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona (BCBSAZ), an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, is the largest Arizona-based health insurance company. The not-for-profit company was founded in 1939 and provides health insurance products, services or networks to nearly 1.3 million individuals. With offices in Phoenix, Flagstaff, Tempe and Tucson, the company employs more than 1,500 Arizonans. For information about BCBSAZ and its HealthyBlue program, an integrated program of tools, resources and services that can help Arizonans live a healthier lifestyle, visit [www.azblue.com/HealthyBlue](http://www.azblue.com/HealthyBlue).



**Additional facts:**

- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one in three children are either overweight or at risk for becoming overweight.
- Also according to the CDCP, the rate of obesity among children 6 to 11 years old more than tripled between 1976 and 2004.
- Arizona ranks 25<sup>th</sup> among states with the highest incidences of childhood obesity, according to the Child Policy Health Center.