

**For immediate release**

**April 15, 2009**

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**Blue Cross and Blue Shield  
of New Mexico**

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## **UNM Foundation Announces Blue Cross and Blue Shield of New Mexico Gifts to UNM Programs Improving Health**

The UNM Foundation is pleased to announce that Blue Cross and Blue Shield of New Mexico (BCBSNM) has awarded UNM \$30,000 to equally benefit three unique programs designed to reduce health disparities, provide legal advocacy for situations affecting children's health and to educate Spanish-speaking New Mexicans about cancer.

"Blue Cross and Blue Shield of New Mexico has been a consistent and generous supporter of the University of New Mexico for many decades," says Betsy Till, UNM Foundation's Director of Corporate and Foundation Relations. "Their gifts to support these programs will help to improve access to health care information and services for all New Mexicans. We appreciate their continued partnership with the University of New Mexico and the UNM Foundation."

### **Reducing Health Disparities**

BCBSNM's gift will provide funding for UNM Department of Communication and Journalism graduate students or faculty engaged in projects addressing health disparities in New Mexico. Faculty will leverage the money to create grant proposals to yield additional funding for health disparities research.

The department offers core emphases in intercultural and health communication, among others, and is committed to research and teaching that helps to reduce health disparities in New Mexico, particularly among Hispanics and Native Americans. Research has included identifying cultural differences in attitudes toward mental health, preventing substance abuse in all of New Mexico's cultural groups, examining the impact of community-based participatory research on reducing health disparities in multicultural communities, addressing substance abuse prevention in a Navajo community and creating a telehealth project addressing issues of childhood obesity in New Mexico.

### **Medical Legal Alliance for Children**

BCBSNM's gift also will provide funding for the Medical Legal Alliance for Children (MLAC) to continue providing direct services and to support outreach activities that promote the program.

A coalition between the UNM School of Law Clinical Law Programs and the UNM Pediatric Clinics and Children's Hospital, MLAC applies legal tools to issues that affect children's health: family stability, safe housing, adequate benefits for caretakers, disability services, access to health care, freedom from abuse and appropriate educational services.

More than half of New Mexico's low- and moderate income households face serious civil legal issues that affect children's health. UNM health care providers refer these families to visit with law clinic students who, under the supervision of experienced law professors, assume professional responsibility for the medical/legal cases. MLAC is a resource for families and children in poverty who otherwise would not receive legal services.

### **Cancer Care 101: Education for Spanish-Speaking New Mexicans**

In addition, BCBSNM's gift will provide funding to create a pilot outreach program at the UNM Cancer Center to educate the Spanish-speaking population of north-central New Mexico about breast cancer. The program will cover why breast cancer is a concern, important risk factors, how it develops, the importance of early detection and screening, diagnosis, treatment options and the barriers to obtaining high-quality medical care. The pilot program will be modeled after UNM's highly successful Cancer 101 series, which educates people in underserved populations about risks, prevention measures and symptoms of cancer.

Differences in race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, education, gender and language can all prevent accurate cancer information from reaching people, and thus prevent access to treatment. This contributes to higher cancer incidence, increased mortality and lower quality of life. In New Mexico, breast cancer is the most frequently diagnosed cancer among women of all racial and ethnic groups, and is the leading cause of cancer death among Hispanic women, who are less likely to receive early diagnosis.

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The UNM Foundation located in Albuquerque, NM promotes excellence at the University of New Mexico by raising, investing and managing private gifts through the cultivation of long-term partnerships with donors and matching their interests to the University's priorities. As an IRS 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation, the Foundation provides donors the opportunity and appropriate tax advantage for supporting University projects and programs. All fundraising and investment activities of the Foundation are limited to benefiting the University of New Mexico. The Foundation assets and earnings are distributed to colleges, departments and programs of the University per donor directions or, if funds are unrestricted, per the direction of the Foundation's volunteer Board of Trustees in response to UNM's priorities.