



**For Immediate Release:**

January 4, 2010

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## **LOCAL COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER RECOGNIZED FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PRACTICES**

*Recipient of competitive grant as well as top honor for its Behavioral Health Services Director*

**PASCOAG, RI** – WellOne (formerly Northwest Community Health Care) announced today that it is the recipient of a \$25,000 BlueAngel Community Health Grant (BACHG) awarded by Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island.

The grant will support WellOne’s hiring of a part-time psychiatric prescriber as a complement to its existing primary care and behavioral health services. This capability will allow WellOne to treat primarily the uninsured/underinsured patient population who lack access to this service in addition to the insured patients who are delayed or denied a timely appointment. The prescriber will consult with the Primary Care Providers (PCPs) to evaluate patients over several sessions, stabilize on medications, and then refer back to the PCP for ongoing treatment. This approach will focus not only on delivering immediate treatment for patients in-need but, over-time, transfer behavioral health medication prescribing knowledge to the PCP staff so that they can eventually assume this care, as well as be skilled to prescribe effectively the use of psychotropic medications for other patients in the future. By involving the PCP in this practice, WellOne will improve the quality of care delivered to the patient by increasing safety through the management of all medications, minimizing cost, and increasing the rate of compliance.

“We are very grateful to Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island’s support for this important program”, stated Peter Bancroft, WellOne’s President & CEO. “Due to the lack of sufficient, locally available health services in rural areas, our target population presents numerous health disparities when compared to the general population. This is particularly true for behavioral health services. Two of our sites, Pascoag and Foster, have the highest Behavioral Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) scores in the state and are in critical need of these services, which are currently unavailable in the area.”

It is estimated that between 25,000-50,000 individuals in Rhode Island annually need some mental health intervention and that generally, only one in three individuals receive needed treatment. Those who do seek a psychiatric medication intervention are more apt to contact their Primary Care Provider with whom they are familiar than a psychiatrist/clinical nurse specialist’s office. Up to 90% of psychotropic medications are prescribed in the PCP setting. (Report of the PCPAC Mental Health Workgroup. RI Department of Health, Primary Care Physicians Advisory Committee; June 2002; Action Paper. Enhancing Primary Care, Psychiatric Medicine Collaboration. Council on Psychosomatic Medicine; February 2008).

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## **WellOne Blue Angel Grant Award**

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Dr. Clifford I. Gordon, Ed.D., Director of The Behavioral Health Program at WellOne Primary Medical and Dental Care, will be the program's Project Director. Dr. Gordon was recently awarded the Rhode Island Psychological Association's highest honor, the 2009 Musiker-Merenda Award. This award was awarded to Dr. Gordon in recognition of his outstanding career long contributions to mental health and psychology in Rhode Island.

### *About WellOne*

Established in 1909, WellOne is the oldest nonprofit community health center in Rhode Island, was the first rural health clinic in the nation, and historically has served as a pioneer in public health initiatives including its groundbreaking immunization and chronic disease management programs. WellOne's mission is to provide the high quality primary medical to the residents of the communities that it serves. WellOne operates sites in Pascoag, Foster and North Kingstown and serves more than 13,000 patients of these communities and the surrounding towns of Glocester, Smithfield, Scituate, West Greenwich, East Greenwich, and Exeter. In addition to primary medical and dental care, the organization provides behavioral health, mammography and bone density scanning services. The organization offers services on a sliding fee scale to qualifying uninsured patients and operates a discount pharmacy program in collaboration with CVS.

### *About BlueAngel Community Health Grants*

The BlueAngel Community Health Grants are a significant way that Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island improves the health of people in communities throughout the state. The goal is to fund projects and initiatives that are closely aligned with the company's corporate vision.

All funded programs must strive to maintain or increase access to healthcare for the uninsured/underinsured in Rhode Island, with a particular focus on minority populations. Examples might include: Direct health care services; Education and navigation of the healthcare system including coverage options; Maintenance and prevention of chronic illnesses prevalent within minority populations.

The Blue Angel Community Health Grants are made possible by the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Rhode Island Community Health Fund, a corporate donor advised fund of The Rhode Island Foundation.