

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Blue Cross Foundation Awards Baton Rouge Area Residents up to \$20,000 Grants
for Volunteerism**

Guardians of Louisiana Youth to Be Honored with Grants at 2015 Angel Award

BATON ROUGE, LA – The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana Foundation is announcing its 2015 Angel Award recipients. Among the class this year are **Dustin LaFont of Baton Rouge, Kristen Maddox of Denham Springs** and **Tanja Foil, also of Baton Rouge**. The three run or volunteer with programs that are focused on providing life-improving resources for children and their families in Louisiana. For that reason, they are what the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana Foundation calls Angels. LaFont, Maddox and Foil will join six other volunteers for Louisiana children as this year's Angel Award recipients.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana works to improve the health and lives of Louisianians. The Blue Cross Foundation believes children who are better cared for are healthier - extending the company's mission beyond customers to the Louisiana public. That is why the Foundation wants to honor those who donate their time and talents to better the lives of Louisiana children -- whether through enrichment projects in the areas of arts and education or programs addressing the direst needs of an underserved population -- with a grant to help them do even more.

LaFont founded [Front Yard Bikes](#) in Baton Rouge in 2010. Front Yard Bikes is a program that teaches young children to earn a bike through hard work and dedication. If kids repair or restore a bike in the Front Yard Bikes shop, they are working to earn it. LaFont uses his experience as a teacher to educate children on mathematics, physics and mechanics while repairing bikes. As a bonus, the kids experience inclusivity, mentorship, recreation and academic achievement. Front Yard Bikes provides ways for youth in the community to participate in weekly group rides, extracurricular activities and in building reliable transportation in a safe environment.

Maddox founded [A Door of Hope](#), a faith-based, non-profit organization in Denham Springs that helps its clients break the vicious cycle of life-controlling issues and self-destructive behaviors such as abuse, addiction, eating disorders, depression, past abortions or self-harm. A Door of Hope provides free counseling and other support services. Inspired by Maddox's own experiences, A Door of Hope works to meet the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of young women in the community.

Foil has volunteered and supported [Families Helping Families of Greater Baton Rouge](#), a non-profit organization that provides resources for children with disabilities and their families, since 2011. In addition to her work with Families Helping Families, Foil also serves as an active voice for autism in the community. Foil helps coordinate the annual Active for Autism 5K and Family Fun Fest and helps facilitate the Attic Trash and Treasure Sale, which raised a record \$94,000 this year for Families Helping Families of Greater Baton Rouge. Foil is recognized as this year's Blue Angel for her efforts outside her daily work as an employee of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana. Her organization will receive a grant of \$5,000.

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About the Angel Award: During two decades, the Angel Award has given more than \$1.9 million to charities whose purpose is to improve the welfare of the state's children. The current Angels bring the number of volunteers honored by the program to 169.

More than 60 nominees from across the state were considered for the award by a committee of past Angel Award winners. Each Angel will receive a \$20,000 grant for the charity of his or her choice. They will be recognized at a presentation ceremony by invitation only Monday, Oct. 19, 2015, at the Renaissance Baton Rouge Hotel.

Other Angel Award winners include:

Elijah Benjamin Evans of Youngsville. Elijah Evans founded [No Use for Abuse](#), an anti-child abuse program, in 2012. No Use for Abuse educates the community about child abuse and ways to prevent this horrible tragedy from happening to children in the Youngsville/Lafayette area.

Bivian “Sonny” Lee, III of New Orleans. Sonny Lee founded [Son of a Saint](#) in 2011 in honor of his mother and late father, former New Orleans Saints cornerback Bivian Lee Jr. Son of a Saint is a New Orleans non-profit organization that provides mentorship, tutoring, community service opportunities, mental health treatment and other self-improvement activities for boys in need of a father figure’s influence.

L.J. “Joe” Rachal of Olla. Joe Rachal is a board member for the [Centennial Cultural Center](#). The Center, a non-profit organization in Olla, works to nurture and promote culture and fine arts in LaSalle Parish, including the Center’s “Very Special Camp” program, an art camp specifically designed for special needs children.

Kassi Robinson of Benton. Kassi Robinson founded [Pay it Forward Networking](#) in 2013. Pay It Forward Networking is an organization based in Bossier City that uses social media networking to grant wishes of children with special needs, disabilities or life-threatening illnesses.

Paula Taylor of Sulphur. Paula Taylor founded the [Sulphur Christian Community Coalition](#) in 2010. The Sulphur Christian Community Coalition is a non-profit organization that organizes volunteers to provide tutoring, GED classes, summer camps, enrichment programs, support groups and more to children of all ages in the community.

Elisha Wilson-Thomas of Tallulah. Elisha Wilson-Thomas founded [Tallulah’s TIARA Girlz](#), a social club for girls ages 3 to 7, in 2009. TIARA – Teaching Independence, Autonomy, Respect and Allegiance – addresses teen pregnancy, drug abuse, extreme poverty and low graduation rates in Tallulah with education at an early age.

Foundation president Michael Tipton says, “These Angels are improving the lives of Louisiana children in countless ways every day. We appreciate their work and look forward to aiding in their efforts.”

For more information about the Angel Award program, visit ourhomelouisiana.org.

About the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana Foundation

The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana Foundation is building a healthier Louisiana through community outreach and charitable giving. Its two signature programs are The Angel Award®, an annual statewide recognition program that awards funds to outstanding Louisianians working to improve the quality of life of the state's children, and Smart Bodies®, an interactive education

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program to prevent childhood obesity. In addition, Blue Cross contributes nearly \$2 million annually in financial aid to various nonprofit organizations throughout the state that contribute to health, education and the overall quality of life in our communities. When we put dollars into Blue Cross communities, it makes Louisiana a better place for everyone. The Foundation is funded solely through Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana.

About Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana

Founded in New Orleans in 1934, [Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana](#) is a private, fully taxed nonprofit company, mutually owned by policyholders—not shareholders. It is an independent licensee of the [Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association](#) and is governed by a Louisiana Board of Directors.

The company and its subsidiaries provide group and individual health insurance plans, life and disability insurance, group voluntary products and administrative services to Louisiana residents. With headquarters in Baton Rouge and eight district offices around the state, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana is committed to improving the lives and health of all Louisianians.

Learn more on the company's website at www.bcbsla.com or visit its [social media hub](#) to connect via Facebook, Twitter and more.

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