

# BLUE CROSS AND BLUE SHIELD OF MINNESOTA

## 2017 SUMMARY OF HEALTHY TOGETHER WILLMAR INITIATIVE

In 2016, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota focused much of our Healthy Together Willmar initiative on building relationships with community members and local organizations, to hear their perspective on the needs and opportunities that exist in Willmar. We committed to listening to the community and having that perspective guide our work here, and to stay connected to external stakeholders as we move the work forward.

Our work in Willmar is grounded in what we heard from listening to core stakeholders, specifically the need for diverse leadership development, more responsive care, and support for existing work. We also identified core values about how we connect and engage with each other, and a desire to engage more across difference. In July 2016 we shared this feedback and plan with the Willmar community and Vision 2040 and moved into planning.

In 2017, Blue Cross implemented action steps based on this feedback, and focused on developing leadership and supporting existing work, which squarely aligns with all Vision 2040 Goal areas. This implementation took shape in many forms, including:

- Ongoing engagement with the Community Table including monthly meetings, monthly meals, and leadership and health equity skill development opportunities
- Launching the Idea Fund, a funding opportunity to support community ideas for a healthier Willmar. This effort was led by the Community Table and was grounded in specific values identified by the group. The group hosted three community meals in the fall of 2017, creating opportunities for community members to connect, build relationships and share ideas to improve the health of the community. Funding decisions are in progress and will be announced by the end of the calendar year
- Blue Cross support and employee engagement in Willmar's Destination playground, through the Super Bowl Legacy Fund Committee's 52 Weeks of Giving, along with 132 Blue Cross employees volunteering over 600 total hours toward the playground build
- Support of local coalitions and projects, including
  - Vision 2040 Steering Committee
  - Taste of Downtown Willmar (in collaboration with Blandin Leadership in Ethnically Diverse Communities)
  - MN You
  - Latino Service Provider's Network
  - Movies in the Park
  - Community Health Leadership
  - Cinco de Mayo
  - Neighborhood Tea
  - Somali Independence Day
  - West Central Industries Resource Center Program
  - Willmar Area Arts Council
  - Diabetes Coalition
  - Community Health Services
  - West Central Dementia Awareness Network
  - Willmar Little Libraries
  - Feed My Starving Children
  - Adult Basic Education
  - Willmar Community Center
  - Bridgebuilders
  - Mental Health in Diverse Communities
  - Willmar Women's Circles
  - Housing Coalition
  - Willmar Bike Alliance
  - Iftiin Somali Youth Center
  - Community Integration Center
  - Blue Cross' responsive funding for water safety and flood relief

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Blue Cross also determined that our responsive care work will include exploring opportunities to support initiatives identified by Willmar's newly established Diabetes Coalition, made up of Blue Cross, APMC, Rice Hospital, Southern Prairie, University of Minnesota Extension, Bethesda, YMCA, Community Health Services, Statewide Health Improvement Project, Willmar Community Education & Recreation, Woodland Centers, Minnesota River Area Agency on Aging and various community members.

We've also worked with Southern Prairie Community Care to develop and implement a tailored diabetes program (Reimagine Wellness) to reach the Latina/o community, along with supporting a full-time community health worker who will work in a variety of community settings to support Somali community members in 2018.

We also launched the website [HealthyTogetherWillmar.org](http://HealthyTogetherWillmar.org), to provide information about our efforts in the community. We continue to add content to the website, and have created a specific area with resources related to health equity.

As we look toward 2018, our focus will be on the Responsive Care work, continuing to support the work of the Community Table, and launching the Idea Fund projects, which will provide \$250,000 of funding to the community. This is significant work with many partners, and will contribute to all areas of Vision 2040.

Finally, we are also providing funding support to ChangeX, which is an organization dedicated to building community wellbeing and providing communities with tangible resources to improve community connectedness through a web-based platform. Blue Cross is providing funding to ChangeX to focus resources in rural parts of Minnesota, including Willmar. We anticipate kicking off this initiative in Willmar in late January or early February 2018.

We are very excited about these efforts, and Blue Cross remains committed to improving health and advancing health equity in Willmar and within communities throughout Minnesota.

