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## Fort Wayne Residents Take Steps to Improve Health and Wellness with Help from Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation

#NFCChallenge2017

**Fort Wayne, Ind. (May 26, 2017)** – Turnstone has recruited a group of 25 Fort Wayne area residents who are blind, visually impaired or have other mobility impairments and have partnered with the United States Association of Blind Athletes (USABA) and the Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation to implement the fifth iteration of the USABA/Anthem National Fitness Challenge. Foundation funding will allow the group to participate in physical activity and sports programming from March to November. Some of the members of the group meet weekly to practice goalball, a team sport for athletes who are blind or visually impaired. Individuals are also training for the Fort4Fitness fall races either the 4mile, 10K, half marathon or marathon that will take place September 30<sup>th</sup>.

The twenty-five participants will be tracking their progress with Fitbit wearables throughout the 9-month program. Using technology on their phones, participants will be able to check-in throughout the day to find out how close they are to hitting their goals – and how other participants are advancing toward their goals.

“Making sure I complete at least 10,000 steps is a great motivator and encourages me to get up and move,” said National Fitness Challenge participant Nettie Flores.

“There have been days I couldn’t get into Turnstone to workout but I still made sure I got my 10,000 steps. Even if I just get up and walk around my apartment to get them, I do because I don’t want to miss out. Having the fitbit has been great as well because I can see my progress all the time.” Nettie usually comes to Turnstone 2-4 days a week to workout.

Research has consistently shown that individuals who participate in regular physical activity to improve their health have higher energy levels, a lower risk of health-related diseases, improved psychological health, and lower rates of depression and anxiety. Unfortunately, because of the many barriers and misconceptions about their abilities, approximately 70 percent of the nearly 56,000 children and youth who are blind and visually impaired in the United States do not participate in even a limited physical education curriculum.

The Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation has served as a sponsor of USABA’s National Fitness Challenge since its inception five years ago. This year, 13 agencies from across the United States, including Turnstone, are joining Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield and USABA to provide more than 330 blind and visually impaired teenagers and adults with an opportunity to increase their physical fitness levels, as well as live healthier and more active lives.

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**ABOUT TURNSTONE:** *Founded in 1943, Turnstone’s mission is to empower people with disabilities to achieve their highest potential by providing comprehensive services and programs. It is the only not-for-profit in the region that offers a full range of programs and facilities designed to meet the unique needs of people with disabilities. [www.turnstone.org](http://www.turnstone.org) | Facebook: [Turnstone Center](https://www.facebook.com/turnstonecenter)*

**About U.S. Association of Blind Athletes**

*Since its founding in 1976, USABA, a community-based organization of the United States Olympic Committee, has reached more than 100,000 blind individuals. The organization has emerged as more than just a world-class trainer of blind athletes, it has become a champion of the abilities of Americans who are legally blind. USABA’s mission: to enhance the lives of blind and visually impaired people by providing the opportunity for participation in sports and physical activity. [www.usaba.org](http://www.usaba.org) | Twitter: [@USABA](https://twitter.com/USABA) | Facebook: [United States Association of Blind Athletes](https://www.facebook.com/UnitedStatesAssociationofBlindAthletes)*

**About Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation**

*Through charitable grant making, the Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation LLC, an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, promotes Anthem’s inherent commitment to enhance the health and well-being of individuals and families in communities that Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield serves. The Foundation focuses its funding on strategic initiatives that address and provide innovative solutions to health care challenges, as well as promoting the Healthy Generations Program, a multi-generational initiative that targets specific disease states and medical conditions. These include: prenatal care in the first trimester, low birth weight babies, cardiac morbidity rates, long term activities that decrease obesity and increase physical activity, diabetes prevalence in adult populations, adult pneumococcal and influenza vaccinations and smoking cessation. The Foundation also coordinates the company’s year-round Associate Giving program and its parent foundation provides a 50 percent match of associates’ pledges. ®ANTHEM is a registered trademark of Anthem Insurance Companies, Inc. The Blue Cross and Blue Shield names and symbols are registered marks of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.*

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