Project 351 Selected as 2014 William C. Van Fasen Community Service Sabbatical Receipient

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Employee to Join the Non-Profit to Help in the Organization's Strategic Planning

BOSTON — October 15, 2014 —Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (Blue Cross) has selected Project 351 as the recipient of its 2014 William C. Van Faasen Community Service Sabbatical. Cindy Speer, a Blue Cross associate and project manager, will join the non-profit for six months and aid the organization by building a long-term strategic plan.

"Blue Cross has an honored place in our young history. They are an extraordinary corporate citizen who invested in an idea back in 2011 and provided the strategic advice and resources to help us realize our mission to strengthen the ethic of youth service across the Commonwealth," said Carolyn Casey, Founder and Executive Director of Project 351. "Cindy's service elevates our partnership to a new level of engagement, and is a statement of faith in the power and potential of young people and in our small team as we look to strengthen our organizational capacity."

Project 351 is a youth service organization that unites 400 Massachusetts eighth graders from every city and town in the state for a yearlong program of leadership development and community service. As a small non-profit start-up with a fulltime staff of two, Project 351 manages an ambitious agenda and a geographically dispersed group of stakeholders comprised of eighth grade service Ambassadors, educators, families, nonprofit partners, and volunteers.

Cindy's addition to the Project 351 team will help the organization expand current leadership and service programming across the State and will enable the staff to pursue new initiatives for the organization's growing community of stakeholders. Cindy brings deep project management and process improvement experience to Project 351; this expertise will be critical as the organization transitions to its next phase of growth.

"I am thrilled to participate in Blue Cross' William C. Van Faasen sabbatical program," said Cindy Speer, project manager at Blue Cross. "Project 351 is an organization that is incredibly inspirational to me, and I believe strongly in its mission to foster a sense of civic engagement within young people across the Commonwealth. I am energized by the opportunity to have a substantive impact on Project 351's 2015 program."

Cindy will serve as Blue Cross' ninth sabbatical program participant. In 2005, Blue Cross' Board of Directors created the sabbatical program to honor former CEO, William C. Van Faasen. The program allows one associate per year a leave of absence to work for a charitable organization in the community, after a rigorous selection process. During this time, the employee receives their standard Blue Cross salary and benefits and knows their position is awaiting them at the end of the six-month break.

"This is truly a unique type of corporate sabbatical; it's paid, and anybody within Blue Cross can apply regardless of tenure," said Jeff Bellows, Blue Cross vice president of corporate citizenship. "We aim to serve as an example of what's possible when employers offer their best and brightest an opportunity to support an incredibly worthy organization. Cindy is a 20-year Blue Cross veteran, with a long-standing history of volunteer service. We know from past recipients that the experience she will bring back to Blue Cross following the sabbatical will be extraordinary."

About Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (http://www.bluecrossma.com/) is a community-focused, tax-paying, not-for-profit health plan headquartered in Boston. We are the trusted health plan for more than 30,000 Massachusetts employers and are committed to working with others in a spirit of shared responsibility to make quality health care affordable. Consistent with our corporate promise to always put our 2.8 million members first, we are rated among the nation's best health plans for member satisfaction and quality. Connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn.

For further information: CONTACT: Kathleen Makela 617.246.7725 kathleen.makela@bcbsma.com