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Economy League and Independence Blue Cross Announce Finalists of Well City Challenge Addressing Community Solutions to Millennial Health

PHILADELPHIA – December 21, 2020 — The Economy League of Greater Philadelphia (ELGP) and Independence Blue Cross (Independence) today announced the finalists for the Well City Challenge. The Well City Challenge is a social impact program to support innovators with new ideas for addressing and improving millennial mental and physical health through community-led ventures.

Fifteen teams were chosen from a pool of more than 100 applications representing all five counties and 51 ZIP codes in Southeastern Pennsylvania. The Well City Challenge supports community-oriented ideas related to three themes: Community and Social Connection, Food and Nutrition, and Mind/Body.

Well City Challenge finalists for the incubator and pitch competition include:

Community & Social Connection

- **Hey, Auntie!** is a virtual multigenerational matching service for millennial women and seasoned women to discuss love, work-life, and everything in between.
- **Hike+Heal** is a women's hiking hive offering healing hikes to increase overall wellness: physically, mentally and spiritually in Philadelphia.
- **Let's Talk Philly Conversation Circles**, in partnership with The Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians, will offer immigrant millennials a space to learn English conversation skills, develop social capital, and tell their stories to break stereotypes, prejudice and increase understanding about immigrant wellness.
- **Mind Your Art**, a collaboration between Fleisher Art Memorial and Juntos, connects community members to the healing benefits of hands-on art-making as a means to build connections, reduce isolation, and improve overall well-being for millennials.
- **The HERO Group Health Coaching Program** supports people to make self-directed, lasting health and behavioral changes by increasing the psychological capital they bring to life circumstances through pro bono group health coaching.

Food & Nutrition

- **B.G.H. (Brain Gut Heart) Wellness** is a food therapy program that provides an open space to talk about mental health, teaches cooking, and reinforces the importance of food on our 3 brains: brain, gut and heart.
- **Land-based Jaws** is a spiritually-rooted organization that provides education and training to BIPOC women on natural agriculture, food sovereignty, survival, carpentry, and community healing guided by skills and lessons highlighted in Octavia Butler's Parable of the Sower series.
- **Philly Food Therapy** provides an inclusive, holistic healthy food experience by bringing together local farms, healthy ingredients, and physical activity to cook a meal and give millennials a tool that they can take into their own kitchens.

- **The Freedom Greens & Gardens Project** reimagines Malcolm X Park and surrounding blocks as a destination for wellness within the heart of West Philadelphia by providing space, community and ongoing opportunities for millennials to be well and to thrive.
- **The Welcome Spot: Interfaith Connection, Coffee, and Conversation in South Philly** uses hyper-local and existing faith communities to develop community programming and create space for millennials to connect over excellent coffee.

Mind/Body

- **Philly's Big Breath** encourages everyone, especially Black and Brown millennials, to take a big deep breath as a very personal act of trauma healing and as a public proclamation that we will fight to protect our right to heal.
- **Racial Healing & Mindful Transformation in Asian American Community** is an initiative to create a space for Asian American millennials to heal from racial trauma through virtual forums promoting a wellness framework of mindfulness, resilience, self-compassion, and social support
- **Shear Balance** is a program to bring mental health awareness to beauty salons and barber shops through providing knowledge about mental health and wellness.
- **Strides** is a running-based training program that encourages millennials to prioritize their long term mental and physical health.
- **VeloLingo**, a program from the Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia, will provide immigrant, refugee, and underrepresented millennials throughout Greater Philadelphia and South Jersey with virtual bicycle education classes and socially distanced community rides led by bilingual and multilingual instructors.

"We are thrilled to have received such a diverse representation of community-led applications focused on improving millennial health in Greater Philadelphia," said Nick Frontino, managing director of the Economy League of Greater Pennsylvania. "It's clear there is no shortage of everyday innovators around our region who want to bring creative solutions to the social sector, and we are looking forward to rolling up our sleeves and supporting Well City Challenge teams in their journey toward impact."

"The millennial generation faces many difficult health challenges, unlike other generations before them. We are pleased that the Well City Challenge has engaged the community to raise awareness. We're also excited about these 15 ideas and their potential to improve lives in a meaningful way," said Marcy Rost, executive vice president, chief strategy and communications officer for Independence Blue Cross. "We congratulate everyone who submitted in each category, and the finalists for moving forward. We wish them good luck in the next stage of the Challenge."

Finalists were selected with the help of a diverse, cross-sector recruitment and selection committee including representatives from local nonprofits, businesses, and community organizations.

In early 2021, finalist teams will participate in a virtual social venture incubator produced by the Economy League. Teams will be paired with mentors from within the Economy League's network to help develop and refine their concepts. At the end of the incubator, teams will pitch their concepts to judges during virtual "Shark Tank"-like pitch competitions with over \$50,000 in prizes, to be awarded sometime in the first quarter of 2021.

The challenge was inspired by the **2019 Blue Cross Blue Shield Health of America report** "[The Health of Millennials](#)," which found that millennials are suffering from more physical and mental health challenges than previous generations, including double-digit increases in 8 out of 10 top health conditions.

About Economy League of Greater Philadelphia

The Economy League of Greater Philadelphia addresses critical issues facing Greater Philadelphia by providing impactful research, connecting diverse leaders, and advancing shared solutions. We envision a

thriving Greater Philadelphia region powered by informed and collaborative leadership. Since its founding in 1909, the Economy League has believed that high-quality analysis and practical insight about the region's most important challenges and opportunities, combined with collaborative, cross-sector leadership are crucial drivers of prosperity in Greater Philadelphia.

About Independence Blue Cross:

[Independence Blue Cross](#) is the leading health insurance organization in southeastern Pennsylvania. With our affiliates, we serve 8 million people nationwide. For more than 80 years, we have been enhancing the health and well-being of the people and communities we serve. We deliver innovative and competitively priced health care products and services; pioneer new ways to reward doctors, hospitals, and other health care professionals for coordinated, quality care; and support programs and events that promote wellness. To learn more, visit ibx.com. Connect with us on Facebook at facebook.com/ibx and on Twitter at [@ibx](https://twitter.com/ibx). Independence Blue Cross is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.