The American Cancer Society and Anthem Foundation Team to Expand Health Equity in At-Risk Communities

Grant will work to mobilize and engage Black Americans in cancer risk reduction and contribute to ACS' mortality goal of reducing cancer death by 40% by 2035

ATLANTA, April 15, 2021 /PRNewswire/ -- Cancer is a disease that affects everyone, but not equally. Studies indicate that Black Americans have the highest death rate and shortest survival of any racial/ethnic group in the United States for most cancers. For the next year, the American Cancer Society (ACS) and the Anthem Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Anthem, Inc., have committed to address the unequal burden of cancer by delivering cancer prevention and early detection information and resources in at-risk communities.

Backed by a $1 million grant, the collaboration will work to break down health disparities and increase health equity in the most vulnerable communities in an effort to increase awareness of breast and colon cancer screening. The programming is anticipated to reach up to 10,000 people.

"The risk factors for Black Americans impacted by breast and colon cancer is alarming and the work to improve early detection must include a focus on eliminating health barriers if we are going to challenge the status quo," said Shantanu Agrawal, M.D., Chief Clinical Officer at Anthem, Inc. "The Anthem Foundation's collaboration with the American Cancer Society and their partnership with The Links, Incorporated and The Links Foundation, Incorporated is one more way we are working to foster an open dialogue in our at-risk communities and help to provide residents with access to tools and healthcare resources dedicated to early cancer screenings that will help further our goal to eliminate health disparities."

To help initiate and promote the conversations and group informational sessions, The ACS has engaged The Links Foundation, Incorporated to train approximately 500 ACS/Links Health Ambassadors who will play a critical role in providing local resources to individuals and encourage them to seek care at community medical homes.

"We are honored by the grant from the Anthem Foundation and to have the opportunity to work with The Links. The Links are trusted messengers across the country with a commitment to community service and advancing public health," said Tawana Thomas-Johnson, Vice President, Diversity and Inclusion for The American Cancer Society. "This partnership will help us continue the critical work of addressing cancer disparities and advancing health equity in at-risk communities."

The importance to reach and influence members within the Black community comes at a critical time. Research done by ACS shows that Black men are 1.2 times more likely to have new cases of colon cancer, as compared to non-Hispanic White men, and death rates among Black women diagnosed with breast cancer are approximately 40% higher than White women.

"The statistics surrounding cancer and people of African descent are disheartening. We not only have the highest mortality rate, but when compared to other racial and ethnic groups, our survival of most cancers has the shortest window. Our organization exists to serve the community, and part of our service efforts are targeted at addressing cancer disparities and driving health equity in all communities touched by cancer. This grant from Anthem Foundation will allow The Links, Incorporated, through our philanthropic arm The Links Foundation, Incorporated, to continue transforming communities by helping to eradicate these inequities while also reducing cancer screening disparities, particularly breast and colon, through community outreach and education." said Kimberly Jeffries Leonard, Ph.D., national president of The Links, Incorporated and The Links Foundation, Incorporated.

About The American Cancer Society
The American Cancer Society is a global grassroots force of 1.5 million volunteers dedicated to saving lives, celebrating lives, and leading the fight for a world without cancer. From breakthrough research, to free lodging near treatment, a 24/7/365 live helpline, free rides to treatment, and convening powerful activists to create awareness and impact, the Society is the only organization attacking cancer from every angle. For more information go to www.cancer.org.

About Anthem Foundation

The Anthem Foundation is the philanthropic arm of Anthem, Inc. and through charitable contributions and programs, the Foundation promotes the organization's commitment to improving lives and communities. Through strategic partnerships and programs, the Foundation addresses the social drivers that will help create a healthier generation of Americans in communities that Anthem, Inc. and its affiliated health plans serve. The Foundation focuses its funding on critical initiatives that make up its Healthy Generations Program, a multi-generational initiative that targets: maternal health, diabetes prevention, cancer prevention, heart health and healthy, active lifestyles, behavioral health efforts and programs that benefit people with disabilities. The Foundation also coordinates the company's year-round Dollars for Dollars program which provides a 100 percent match of associates' donations, as well as its Volunteer Time Off and Dollars for Doers community service programs. To learn more about the Anthem Foundation, please visit http://www.anthem.foundation and its blog at https://medium.com/anthemfoundation.

About The Links Foundation, Incorporated
The Links Foundation, Incorporated has contributed more than $25 million to charitable causes since its founding. In 2018, it named its fifth $1 million grantee – St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. Other million- dollar grantees include the United Negro College Fund, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., the National Civil Rights Museum and the Smithsonian National Museum of African American Culture and History in Washington, D.C.

About The Links, Incorporated
The Links, Incorporated is an international, not-for-profit corporation, established in 1946. The membership consists of more than 16,000 professional women of color in 292 chapters located in 41 states, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of the Bahamas and the United Kingdom. Links members contribute more than 1 million documented hours of community service annually – strengthening their communities and enhancing the nation. For more information, visit www.linksinc.org.

SOURCE American Cancer Society

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