

Blue Cross Blue Shield, Blue Care Network seek angels for awards

Nominations due June 8 for individuals who make extraordinary efforts to improve the lives of Michigan's children

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Care Network are accepting nominations for the annual Caring for Children Angel Awards from now until June 8.

Now in its third year, the Angel Award is a statewide

recognition program honoring individuals who distinguish themselves through their outstanding work for children in the state. This year, one angel will be chosen from each of five regions of the state; and the Grand Angel will be selected from those five finalists.

"We're looking for people who volunteer their time to improve the lives of Michigan's children,"

said Diana C. Jones, Blue vice president of community affairs. "We need to hear from community members statewide to help us find these angels. Anyone can nominate individuals whose volunteer work benefits Michigan's children."

The Angel Award program presents a \$5,000 grant to the first place winner's designated nonprofit organization, as well

as \$1,000 grants to each of the other four regional winners' organizations. Only nonprofit charitable organizations with a tax-exempt status under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service code are eligible for contributions connected with the award.

If the winner or finalists are associated with a non-qualifying program, a qualifying program

related to his or her service may be designated.

A panel of judges in each of the five regions will select a regional winner and judges from all five regions will select the Grand Angel. The five regions are southeast, mid-Michigan, west, east and Upper Peninsula.

The deadline for nominations is June 8. Nomination forms and additional information are available by calling the Blues' toll-free line at (800) 733-BLUE (2583) or from the Blues' Web site at www.bcbm.com/angel.

Teens looking for some zzzzz's should follow tips

Be a bedhead and not a dead-head! For a healthy body and mind, understand the dangers of insufficient sleep and avoid them. The National Sleep Foundation recommends the following tips for tired teens:

1. Understand that sleep is food for the brain. Lack of sleep can make you look tired and feel depressed, irritable or angry. Even mild sleepiness can hurt your performance - from taking school exams to playing sports or video games. Most adolescents need between 8.5 and 9.25 hours of sleep each night. Remember, you should awaken refreshed, not tired.
2. Be consistent. Establish a regular bedtime and waketime

and maintain this schedule during weekends and school (or work) vacations. Don't stray from your schedule frequently, and never do so for two or more consecutive nights.

If you must go off schedule, avoid delaying your bedtime by more than one hour. Awaken the next day within two hours of your regular schedule. If you are sleepy during the day, take an early afternoon nap.

3. Get into bright light as soon as possible in the morning, but avoid it in the evening. The light helps to signal the brain when it should wake up and when it should prepare to sleep. (If you wake up in the middle of the night and turn on the light,

melatonin, a sleep hormone, will start to decrease within 10-15 minutes, said Dr. Tim Roehrs, research director for the Sleep Disorders Center at Henry Ford Hospital.)

4. Understand your circadian rhythms. Then you can maximize your schedule throughout the day according to your internal clock. For example, to compensate for your "slump" times, participate in stimulating activities or interactive classes. Try to avoid lecture classes and potentially unsafe activities, including driving.

5. After lunch (or after noon),

stay away from caffeinated coffee and colas as well as nicotine, which are all stimulants. Also avoid alcohol, which disrupts sleep.

6. Relax before going to bed. Avoid heavy reading, studying and computer games within one hour of going to bed. Don't fall asleep with the television on since flickering light and stimulating content can inhibit restful sleep.

Reprinted from "Adolescent Sleep Need and Pattern," published by the National Sleep Foundation.

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STRESS & ARTHRITIS

What is the role of stress in arthritis? Does arthritis cause stress, or does stress cause arthritis?

My opinion is that arthritis causes stress. It is difficult to conceive that depression, anxiety, panic, or an intense and burdensome personal life could create the cascade of events that involve an inflammatory arthritis. Conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis, lupus arthritis, psoriatic arthritis, gout, Sjogren's syndrome, and polymyositis demand a prolonged and complicated body response. Investigators know that it takes an injury to act as the initiating event. This injury needs further characteristics including the ability to act with specific lymphocytes. Mental stress cannot create such an injury even if molecular size.

Osteoarthritis occurs because of a wearing away of joint cartilage. Physical stress, not mental pressure, is the mechanism behind such wear.

You may consider fibromyalgia a special case where stress plays a substantial role. I agree. However, the predisposition to a stress response seems to be in-born with the person experiencing fibromyalgia. The predisposing traits of heightened sensitivity, fearfulness, and frequently isolated trauma are attributes of fibromyalgia from childhood.

In fibromyalgia, the personality causes strain rather than strain bringing on the personality. Finally, the daily pain of arthritis and the sustained period of its presence, must leave its mark on stress. It is not reasonable to ask an individual to accept the bad expectations and arbitrary limits arthritis imposes without making allowance for depression, anger, anxiety, and tears.

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