

Blue Cross opens health and insurance center

By Dave Hodges

Democrat Business Editor

Insurer Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida Inc. officially opened its latest Florida Blue retail center Tuesday in Tallahassee, a move to bring health information and resources closer to the community.

The office at 2116 Apalachee Parkway is designed to be a resource center with such services as health screenings, wellness events and information about health topics and insurance, the company said.

Pat Geraghty, chairman and CEO of BCBS Florida, said being accessible and available to the whole community is a primary goal of the Florida Blue project. "It is a consumer marketplace more and more in health care, and we believe we need to be connected to each and every individual,"

he said.

Tallahassee marks the eighth location in the state where BCBS has opened a Florida Blue center. The others are Tampa, Miami, Jacksonville, Orlando, Fort Lauderdale, Pensacola and Fort Myers.

The Tallahassee center, which totals 5,100 square feet and has a staff of 14, was built on an outparcel in front of the Target department store. Florida Blue will have an opening event this weekend for the community with food, music and health demonstrations. It's 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and noon to 5 p.m. Sunday.

Local officials and health professionals got their first look at the center Tuesday morning. Agency for Health Care Administration Secretary Elizabeth Dudek said she was glad to see the facility open. "I like the idea of being able to go in

and talk about health care," she said, adding consumers will have a place to find out what resources are available and the kinds of decisions they can make about health and wellness.

"I am actually going to have some of my employees come by and check it out," Dudek said.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida Inc. serves about 7 million Floridians with health insurance services.

"People have been asking me 'Why don't you keep your interactions online? Isn't that the cheapest way to do things?' Well, frankly, you can buy a toaster online, but health care is more complicated. It's more personal, and we believe that a commitment to our members, our customers is demonstrated through having these retail stores and making them very accessible to the community," Geraghty said.



MIKE EWEN/DEMOCRAT

Blue Cross and Blue Shield opened its eighth storefront in Florida on Tuesday on Apalachee Parkway in Tallahassee. The office will offer health screenings, claims assistance, information on health insurance plans and other services.