



Southern University at Shreveport, LA  
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **SUSLA CDC Awarded \$300,000 Collective Impact Grant from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana Foundation for MS KICK Program**

Shreveport, LA – The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana Foundation announced that they will invest \$300,000 in Southern University at Shreveport, LA’s (SUSLA) Milam Street Kitchen Incubator and Community Kitchen (MS KICK). The kitchen, located in the heart of Shreveport’s Choice Neighborhood, will provide jobs, training and business mentorship, health education and a healthy restaurant in an effort to improve health in the Allendale and Ledbetter Heights communities.

MS KICK is comprised of two parts:

- The **Kitchen Incubator** will provide training and business mentorship to budding chefs, while also creating jobs with livable incomes that contribute to the economic base of the community, and
- The **Community Kitchen** includes the Community Café, which will offer tasty, healthy meals, and the Culinary Medicine Center, which will provide health and wellness services through the culinary nutrition.

The Culinary Medicine Center is based on the Tulane School of Medicine’s Teaching Kitchen Model. With participation from area medical schools, the MLK Medical Center & Pharmacy will lead the Culinary Medicine Center to teach doctors and allied health professionals preventative medicine and wellness through food – techniques that can be taught to their patients.

SUSLA’s Chancellor Dr. Rodney Ellis states that, “Southern University is excited about this partnership and appreciates the investment from the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana Foundation. This area was once a vibrant, economically thriving community and we know it can be again. The Blue Cross Foundation’s investment will not only help provide healthy options for residents, but it will help restore a healthy economic base as well.”

In 2016, the City of Shreveport’s Department of Community Development in cooperation with the Housing Authority began researching a project to help revitalize the Allendale and Ledbetter Heights community. After extensive research and community forums, MS KICK evolved as the project to help fulfill that goal. The MS KICK concept builds on the (Choice Neighborhood) area’s rich history of legendary restaurants which, brought people together around great food and a sense of community.

“Addressing health through community-wide partnerships has proven impact”, says Michael Tipton, president of the Blue Cross Foundation:

(more)

“Through our years of investing in community health initiatives, we know that communities coming together to improve health can make a lasting difference. These efforts influence people to make small changes in healthy behavior that can build into lasting lifestyle habits,” Tipton says.

Janice Sneed, SUSLA’s Vice Chancellor for Community and Workforce Development said, “We are encouraged by this new partnership with the Blue Cross Foundation to improve health and wellness in Allendale and Ledbetter Heights through a comprehensive education and training system. I think it’s vital that we become familiar with health information about the food we eat and serve our families, and that is one of the main functions of the Milam Street Kitchen Incubator.”

MS KICK is located at 1201 Milam Street and is projected to open in spring of 2019. Darrin Dixon, Executive Director of the CDC and MS KICK Project Director encourages anyone seeking to participate in the Incubator or seeking additional information about the program to contact him at [ddixon@susla.edu](mailto:ddixon@susla.edu) or [mkick@susla.edu](mailto:mkick@susla.edu) .

For more information about the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation of Louisiana grant, contact Stephanie Rogers, Chief Advancement Officer at [srogers@susla.edu](mailto:srogers@susla.edu) or Darrin Dixon.

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*Southern University at Shreveport, an institution within the Southern University System, seeks to provide a quality education for its students, while being committed to the total community. This institution prepares students for careers in technical and occupational fields; awards certificates and associate degrees as well as offerings and programs that are transferable to other colleges and universities. Dedicated to excellence in instruction and community service, this open enrollment institution promotes cultural diversity, provides developmental and continuing education, and seeks partnerships with business and industry.*

Visit MS-KICK on the web at: <http://www.susla.edu/page/ms-kick>

