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Healthy Hoops program kicks off in Pee Dee Area

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For children who suffer with asthma, playing sports can be a real challenge. Over 9 percent of children in South Carolina suffer with this chronic disease, and many forgo playing sports because they think they have to. As a way to educate children and their parents on how to incorporate sports while managing their asthma, Select Health of South Carolina, along with South Florence High School Head Men's Basketball Coach John Schweitz, will be hosting the first-ever Healthy Hoops Pee Dee Challenge, to be held from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, August 29 at South Florence High School, 3200 S. Irby Street in Florence. **A media conference will be held during the opening ceremony beginning at 10 a.m. Schweitz, along with former USC Basketball stand-out Terry Dozier and Southern Wesleyan University Head Women's Basketball Coach LaCheryl Smith, is taking part in the Pee Dee Challenge to help children with asthma stay healthy and active while learning how to control their asthma. The challenge is a fun-filled free event that features basketball lessons, health screenings and asthma education for children ages seven to 15 years old, and their families. Participants will also enjoy live entertainment and an awards ceremony. Lunch will be provided by Select Health of South Carolina, the South Carolina Asthma Alliance, AmeriHealth Mercy and the Healthy Hoops Coalition, which includes a host of community partners, the Pee Dee Challenge will use basketball as a platform to teach participants and their families how to manage asthma through appropriate medication usage, proper nutrition, monitored exercise and recreational activities. Since the program began in South Carolina in 2005, Healthy Hoops has helped hundreds of asthmatic children across the state gain control of this chronic disease. Space is still available for asthmatic children to participate in the Pee Dee Challenge. However, children must receive a health screening first. For more information or to register, visit www.selecthealthofsc.com.

Incorporated in 1995, Select Health was licensed as a Health Maintenance Organization by the South Carolina Department of Insurance in 1996. Later that year, the company contracted with the Department of Health and Human Services to offer First Choice, the state's first Medicaid health plan. Select Health is accredited by URAC and is a wholly owned subsidiary of AmeriHealth Mercy. The AmeriHealth Mercy Family of Companies touches the lives of more than 6.2 million members nationwide. The Healthy Hoops Coalition serves as a steering committee for the Pee Dee Hoops Program and includes the following organizations: South Carolina Asthma Alliance, Allergy, Asthma, & Sinus Center, American Lung Association, Cheraw-Bennettsville District AME Zion Church, City of Columbia Parks and Recreation Department, City of Florence Parks & Leisure Services, Family Connections of SC, Florence-Darlington Technical College, Florence County First Steps, Florence County Parks and Recreation, Florence School District One, Pee Dee Community Action Partnership, Pee Dee Community Action Partnership Head Start, Safe Kids Florence led by McLeod Health, Small Smiles of Florence, South Florence High School, and Tuomey Healthcare System.

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