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Kids learn to control Asthma, play better basketball

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Select Health's Healthy Hoops Pee Dee Challenge dribbles into town.

FLORENCE, S.C. – Asthma was no competition for the 68 children who participated in last Saturday's Healthy Hoops Pee Dee Challenge. The event returned for its second year to South Florence High School on May 15 and featured basketball coaching, free health screenings and health education for parents. The Healthy Hoops Program, which was founded in Philadelphia and expanded to South Carolina in 2005, uses various elements of basketball to teach participants and their families how to manage asthma through appropriate medication usage, proper nutrition and monitored exercise.

“It was great to see so many Pee Dee-area children and parents participate in the 2010 Healthy Hoops Challenge,” said Marilyn Brooks, manager of Select Health's community liaison department. “Healthy Hoops is proof that with proper control and medication, asthmatic children can participate in athletics and lead normal, active, healthy lives

Several area coaches and basketball legends provided specialized instruction focused on ball handling, shooting, dribbling and passing. Coaches included John Schweitz, South Florence High School physical education teacher and boys basketball coach; Terry and Perry Dozier, twin brothers and former University of South Carolina star players; Sonny Hill, founder and executive director of the Sonny Hill Community League and executive advisor for Philadelphia 76ers and Bill Fox, former head men's basketball coach, at Father Judge High School in Philadelphia, PA.

The Pee Dee Challenge is just one of the many Healthy Hoops events taking place across the state throughout the year and was also sponsored by the SCAA, AmeriHealth Mercy and the Healthy Hoops Coalition, which includes a host of community partners. For more information on the Healthy Hoops program, visit www.selecthealthofsc.com or call 1-888-HOOPS-SC.

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 6.5 million members nationwide. For more information, visit www.selecthealthofsc.com.

The Healthy Hoops Coalition serves as a steering committee for the Pee Dee Healthy 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; Carolina Hospital Systems; and Tuomey Healthcare System.