

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 20, 2021

Alberta Blue Cross® supports access to healthy food through sponsorship of Fresh Routes

One in 10 households experience food insecurity in Alberta, according to a [report from Alberta Health Services](#). A recent [study published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal](#) found that people experiencing food insecurity are more likely to have multiple chronic diseases where food insecurity may impact management of their health, and annual health-care costs increase with food insecurity.

As part of its commitment to promoting wellness and health equity, Alberta Blue Cross has just announced a sponsorship of Fresh Routes for 2022. Fresh Routes is a not-for-profit, social enterprise in Calgary that has a mission to ensure everyone has access to affordable, nutritious food—especially those who need it most. Fresh Routes operates a fleet of vehicles as mobile markets, including a retrofitted city transit bus, to deliver discounted healthy food directly to low socio-economic status communities year-round.

“Food insecurity has increased sharply across Alberta in the 20 months since the pandemic began,” says Brian Geislinger, vice-president of Corporate Relations with Alberta Blue Cross. “As a key social determinant of health, access to nutritious food is critically important to both physical and mental health. The role that Fresh Routes plays is particularly important to vulnerable populations where there are often food ‘deserts’, meaning access is just not available.”

Over the next year, Alberta Blue Cross will be sponsoring seven community stops in and around Calgary—four stops in the Hillhurst (Sunnyside), Sunalta, Forest Lawn and Greenwood urban communities and three stops in the Indigenous communities of the Stoney Nakoda, Piikani and Siksika Nations. Alberta Blue Cross will also be providing discount coupons to the communities throughout the year for additional food savings. Funding for the sponsorship is provided by Alberta Blue Cross’s community foundation.

“Fresh Routes was established to take a dignity-based approach that doesn’t require proof of income and is affordable, convenient and culturally appropriate,” says Fresh Routes founder, Lourdes Juan. “This partnership means that Alberta Blue Cross recognizes dignified food access for a healthier and food-equitable future.”

Operating on a dignified food model, Fresh Routes ensures its mobile markets are affordable at 24 to 46 per cent below market value. In 2020, Fresh Routes served almost 13,000 households, 2,700 of which were Indigenous, and calculated an increase in food security of \$230,000. Fresh Routes focuses on removing stigma, promoting dignity and offering culturally relevant food choices to provide local communities with dignified and affordable access to healthy food.

As Alberta’s largest health benefit provider, Alberta Blue Cross has a unique mandate to promote the health and wellness of Albertans. This mandate includes a commitment to supporting communities across the province through partnerships with organizations such as Fresh Routes. For more information about Alberta Blue Cross’s varied involvements, visit community.ab.bluecross.ca.

-30-

For more information, please contact Katelyn Pretzlaff, communications officer, Corporate Communications, Alberta Blue Cross, at kpretzla@ab.bluecross.ca.

ab.bluecross.ca