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**Blue Cross Blue Shield of Georgia and Piedmont Healthcare
Announce Contract Agreement**

ATLANTA – Blue Cross Blue Shield of Georgia (BCBSGa) and Piedmont Healthcare announced today that they have reached agreement on a three-year contract, effective August 1, 2006.

Under the agreement, BCBSGa HMO/POS and PPO members will be able to access Piedmont Healthcare as an in-network provider as of August 1, including services from Piedmont Clinic physicians, Piedmont Hospital in Atlanta and Piedmont Fayette Hospital in Fayetteville. Piedmont Mountainside Hospital also is included in this new contract. Specific details of the agreement will remain confidential.

Both BCBSGa and Piedmont Healthcare will immediately begin informing patients and members, providers, brokers and other key constituents of the agreement via mailed and other communications.

BCBSGa HMO members who have changed primary care physicians (PCPs) due to the previous contract expiration may change their PCP back to their former Piedmont Healthcare PCP. Members who would like to change their PCP should call the toll-free number on their member ID cards.

“While we know this has been a complex process, BCBSGa and Piedmont Healthcare have come to an agreement that ultimately accomplishes a very important mission – providing patients and members access to affordable, quality health care,” said Caz Matthews, BCBSGa president. “Both parties very much appreciate the support and patience of our members and patients and the metro-Atlanta business community. We also acknowledge and value the concern demonstrated by Georgia Insurance Commissioner John Oxendine, Governor Sonny Perdue's office and other policy leaders in a resolution that is in the best long-term interests of our community.”

“Piedmont has a century-long commitment to the residents of Georgia and the communities we serve. This agreement ensures that BCBSGa members have access to the highest quality healthcare and the physicians and hospitals they have come to trust,” said R. Timothy Stack, President and CEO of Piedmont Healthcare. “The new agreement recognizes the value that Piedmont physicians and hospitals bring to the community. We are pleased to renew our participation in the BCBSGa provider network that serves so many of our patients.”

As part of the new agreement, Piedmont Healthcare is joining BCBSGa's Quality-In-Sights Hospital Incentive Program (Q-HIP), which recognizes and rewards hospitals that meet and exceed quality measures in patient safety, patient outcomes and patient satisfaction.

"We're pleased Piedmont Healthcare is participating in QHIP, a program that has been proven to improve the quality of health care services while reducing costs," Matthews said. "Both BCBSGa and Piedmont Healthcare recognize the connection between patient safety, health outcomes and patient satisfaction is critical to improving patient care and controlling cost."

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About Blue Cross Blue Shield of Georgia

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Georgia is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association and is an operating subsidiary of WellPoint Inc., the largest publicly traded commercial health benefits company in terms of membership in the United States. WellPoint, Inc. is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association and serves its members as the Blue Cross licensee for California; the Blue Cross and Blue Shield licensee for Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Missouri (excluding 30 counties in the Kansas City area), Nevada, New Hampshire, New York (as Blue Cross Blue Shield in 10 New York City metropolitan counties and as Blue Cross, Blue Shield or Blue Cross Blue shield in selected upstate counties only), Ohio, Virginia (excluding the Northern Virginia suburbs of Washington, D.C.), Wisconsin; and through UniCare. Additional information about WellPoint is available at www.wellpoint.com. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Georgia can be found on the web at www.bcbsga.com.

About Piedmont Healthcare

Piedmont Healthcare (PHC), a not-for-profit organization and one of the nation's 100 Best Performing Integrated Healthcare Networks (Top 100 IHNs), is the parent company of Piedmont Hospital, a 500-bed acute tertiary care facility in the north Atlanta community of Buckhead. Piedmont Hospital offers all major medical, surgical and diagnostic services, and is a recipient of the 2006 Distinguished Hospital Award for Patient Safety™ from HealthGrades (a leading healthcare ratings company) and one of the nation's Most Wired hospitals in the 2006, 2005 and 2004 100 Most Wired Survey and Benchmarking Study. PHC also includes:

- Piedmont Fayette Hospital, a 100-bed acute care community hospital in Fayetteville, named one of the nation's 100 Top Hospitals® for the third year in a row and one of the nation's Most Wired hospitals in 2006 and 2005;
- Piedmont Mountainside Hospital, a 35-bed community hospital in Jasper and one of the nation's Most Improved hospitals in the 2006 Most Wired Survey and Benchmarking Study;
- The Piedmont Hospital Foundation, the philanthropic entity for private fundraising initiatives;
- Piedmont Physicians Group, with more than 70 primary care physicians in 20 offices throughout metro Atlanta; and
- The Piedmont Clinic, a 498-member physician network.

For more information, visit www.piedmont.org.