

## Blue Cross opening retail shop in Boynton Beach

By **ALEXANDRA CLOUGH**

*Palm Beach Post Staff Writer*

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BOYNTON BEACH — Blue Cross Blue Shield of Florida Inc. on Wednesday struck a deal to open a retail insurance store in Boynton Beach.

The store, called Florida Blue, will allow people to buy health insurance, talk to representatives about different insurance options, or research providers, treatments and costs.

Blue Cross Blue Shield has been rolling out the centers across the state, and this is the company's first Palm Beach County location.

Florida Blue will be on Congress Avenue, in the Catalina Shopping Centre, just south of Gateway Boulevard. The 8,000-square-foot center will be on the site of a former Macaroni Grill restaurant, which will be torn down and rebuilt for Blue Cross, said Randy Tulepan, of Tulepan Management, which owns the property.

Plans are to open by the second quarter of next year.

A Blue Cross Blue Shield spokesman, while not able to confirm the freshly signed Boynton Beach deal, did acknowledge that the company has plans to open a center in Palm Beach County.

In addition to offering insurance information, Florida Blue centers also are designed as a community gathering spot. The centers will offer wellness checks, health screenings and special events, which are available for the entire community, and not just Blue Cross members. Fitness classes also are offered.

Designed to have an atmosphere that is a cross between an Apple Store and a cellphone store, Florida Blue centers are family-friendly, eye-catching and high-tech, even featuring video game consoles for children.

The personal approach to buying health insurances comes as many people, for the first time, find themselves navigating the health insurance world on their own. Job losses have left people without the coverage of a group policy provided by an employer.

Tulepan said the center is a natural fit for the densely populated Congress Avenue corridor, and the stand-alone space gives the center instant visibility on the heavily trafficked road.

Florida Blue centers are in Fort Lauderdale, Miami, Jacksonville, Orlando and Tampa. A center is opening next week in Pensacola