



Festiva partners with Wells Fargo and Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina for enhanced employee benefits

Jan. 23, Asheville, NC – Effective January 1, 2012, [Festiva Hospitality Group](#) has selected to partner with Wells Fargo Insurance Services as its insurance broker and Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina (BCBSNC) as its health and dental insurance benefits provider. This new partnership is an important milestone for Festiva, which has been partially self-funded for health and dental insurance for that last six years.

“With the ever-changing state health care reform, Festiva decided to move from being a partially self-funded program to partnering with Wells Fargo in a fully-funded insurance plan with a Health Reimbursement Account (HRA) for two basic reasons. We want our employees to get the best benefits available and we want to ensure the long-term health of Festiva and our Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP),” said Terri Kirkpatrick, Human Resources Manager for Festiva.

The partnership with BCBSNC for health and dental insurance is beneficial for individual employees as well as the company as a whole. The resulting cost savings from previous years will enhance the value of Festiva’s ESOP for all employees, and the extensive information offered by BCBSNC will give employees incentive and encouragement to embrace healthier lifestyles. The robust wellness plans provided by both Wells Fargo and BCBSNC will help Festiva create its own homegrown customized wellness plan for its employees.

Another major change to the benefits program for Festiva’s employees is the coverage of health, dental, vision, disability and life insurance for domestic partners, including both opposite-sex and same-sex unmarried couples. By offering insurance coverage and benefits to domestic partners, Festiva joins local Asheville employer Mission Hospitals along with several companies in the resort and hospitality industry including Marriott International, Hyatt Hotels, MGM Resorts and Wynn Resorts.

“In 2010, Festiva became an employee-owned company, and this was a logical next step in the growth and progression of our organization,” Kirkpatrick said. “The new coverage helps us streamline our benefits while ensuring a level playing field for everyone. It is a great offering for individual employees, as well as a positive change for the long-term strength of Festiva as a company.”

In addition to the extensive wellness program and benefits for domestic partners, employees can also participate in a flexible spending plan. This allows them to designate a portion of their paycheck for pre-tax income that can be spent on health-related items including co-pays, over-the-counter and prescription medications and child care.

Along with health and dental insurance from BCBSNC, Festiva's full-time employees have access to eye care insurance through EyeMed, flexible spending and health reimbursement accounts through Elkin & Associates, a 401(k) program through Transamerica and both short-term and long-term disability coverage as well as life insurance through UNUM. Festiva as a company pays for short-term disability as well as \$30,000 in life insurance, and employees can voluntarily enroll in a long-term disability option as well as extended life insurance coverage. Festiva also pays for half of each covered employee's deductibles through the health reimbursement account, once the deductible is met by the employee.

About Wells Fargo: Wells Fargo Insurance Services is a full service insurance brokerage and is the largest bank-affiliated broker in the U.S. with 200 offices and more than 8,000 employees in 37 states, Wells Fargo Insurance Services is the fifth largest insurance brokerage firm in the world.

About Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina: Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina (BCBSNC) is a not-for-profit, fully taxed company with headquarters in Chapel Hill and major operations centers in Durham and Winston-Salem. We are the largest health insurer in the state, with over 4,000 employees serving more than 3.7 million customers.

About Festiva Hospitality Group: Based in Asheville, North Carolina, [Festiva Hospitality Group](#) manages and operates a dynamic collection of hotels and resorts in some of the most sought-after destinations throughout the Midwest, Southeast, Northeast and Caribbean. [Festiva Sailing Vacations](#), a Festiva company that operates the Festiva Cruise Club, charters all-inclusive luxury catamaran yachts in the Caribbean. Festiva currently has more than 60,000 members among 23 vacation ownership resorts and five Festiva Cruise Club destinations. The number of members in the [Festiva Adventure Club](#) exceeds 20,000.