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**BLUECROSS BLUESHIELD OF WESTERN NEW YORK & DUKE REALTY CORP.  
HOLD TOPPING-OFF CEREMONY FOR DOWNTOWN HEADQUARTERS  
*Construction on the new complex reaches halfway point***

**BUFFALO, NY** – The final steel beam for BlueCross BlueShield of Western New York's new downtown corporate headquarters at 249 West Genesee Street was hoisted into place today during a topping off ceremony. The ceremony marked the midway point in construction of BlueCross BlueShield's \$100 million, 469,000 square foot office complex. The 30-foot steel beam was signed by BlueCross BlueShield's Buffalo workforce.

"Today's "topping off" ceremony is a celebration, a show of good fortune for the project and the continued evolution of our company and our vision to build a healthier Buffalo," said Alphonso O'Neil-White, president & CEO of BlueCross BlueShield of Western New York. "Since the very beginning, we were committed to having a location that provided a positive community impact and a catalyst for economic development. For more than four decades, this City of Buffalo site stood dormant as a brownfield. Soon it will be a revitalized workplace, serving as a wonderful gateway into downtown Buffalo."

O'Neil-White expressed his gratitude to the local Building and Trades Council leadership and the hundreds of construction workers who have put in 163 days of work to date, erecting 2,500 tons of steel with no safety incidents. He acknowledged the administrations of the City of Buffalo, Erie County and New York State for their assistance and support, as well as the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation for their expedition of the largest brownfields remediation in the history of Western New York.

Officials from Duke Realty Corporation, the project's developer and owner of the building, were on hand to celebrate the milestone and acknowledge the work of local laborers.

"Today we reached a milestone with the construction of BlueCross BlueShield of Western New York's new headquarters. As the final beam of steel is placed, we celebrate the safety of the job site workers and what will become a vibrant addition to the greater Buffalo economy," said Chris Seger, Duke's executive vice president. "The project provides an excellent example of public and private groups efficiently working together to create a new legacy for Buffalo."

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The building's design team anticipates a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified building from the United States Green Building Council. Using "green" building materials and environmentally-sensitive systems that include energy-efficient heating, cooling and lighting, the remediation of a brownfield site along with several other features incorporated into the overall design will make this a high-performance, sustainable building. When completed next summer, it will be the largest LEED-certified building in Western New York.

The new headquarters will feature two office towers connected by a seven-story glass atrium: one tower includes an eight-story curved glass curtain wall facing Lake Erie, and the other is a six-story section that includes the main entrance on Seventh Street. In addition, the complex includes a five-story parking structure for 1,500 cars on the 15.5 acre parcel. The historic 1848 stone façade of the original Buffalo Gas Light Company has also been preserved and incorporated into the design of the new building.

"The topping off of the future BlueCross BlueShield headquarters is an exciting milestone, bringing this project even closer to completion and infusing downtown Buffalo with hundreds more workers," said Mayor Byron Brown. "It is the type of commitment and investment from BlueCross BlueShield that has helped fuel greater interest from other businesses seeking to locate in the city of Buffalo."

At Friday's ceremony, the steel beam was raised with an American flag as well as an evergreen tree, symbolizing the completion of the first phase of the project without injury. Topping off ceremonies, a centuries old tradition from Europe, take place when the steel framing phase of a major construction project is finished.

There is much involved in this unique 469,000 square foot structure. Examples include:

- All building materials were purchased within 500 miles of the construction site.
- At the peak of the construction phase of the project (Summer 2006), there will be close to 200 workers on the job.
- The total weight of the structural steel frame is 2,500 tons.
- The finished building will include the following:
  - 95,000 square feet of glass curtain wall and 5,044 glass windows
  - 16,000 sheets of dry wall
  - 5,000 cubic feet of dirt was removed
  - 13,150 cubic yards of concrete or 1,500 truckloads (enough to fill the ice surface of HSBC Arena 22 feet thick)

### **About BlueCross BlueShield of Western New York**

*BlueCross BlueShield of Western New York is a division HealthNow New York Inc., one of the Northeast's leading healthcare companies that provides quality healthcare and innovative solutions for members across Upstate New York. Headquartered in Buffalo, NY, the Company's revenues exceeded \$2 billion in 2005.*