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**2007 – Michigan’s *Year of Public Health*
June is “Reduce Your Risk” Month**

Coldwater, June 1, 2007 – Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote that “the greatest wealth is health.” Anyone who’s suffered with an illness or chronic disease knows the truth of these simple words.

The good news is that illnesses such as diabetes, asthma, cardiovascular disease, kidney disease, arthritis and osteoporosis can be prevented or minimized by eating healthy, exercising often, reducing stress and not smoking. The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph CHA works daily to educate its citizens about these diseases and promote healthy lifestyles in order to save lives and, in terms of health-care costs, to also save dollars.

“We all understand the importance of keeping ourselves and our families healthy, which is a great motivator for prioritizing smart lifestyle choices,” said Vivian Frudakis, Community Health Educator. “But we may not think about the fact that an unhealthy population also impacts the bottom line in terms of the economy; we all pay the price when Michigan is not as healthy as it could, and should, be.”

The “Michigan Steps Up!” program (www.michiganstepsup.org) offers an interactive, online way to help citizens by providing tools for creating a personal health plan, recording daily achievements, updating weekly goals and completing a health-risk appraisal. The site is organized into sections geared specifically toward five different groups: People, Schools, Communities, Businesses and Health-Care Settings. The site includes healthy recipes, tips for staying in shape and staying motivated, how to order healthy at restaurants, and more.

“There are some really great ideas on the web site,” said Frudakis. “For example, I like the advice to ‘shop on the edge,’ which urges you to shop around the outer aisles of the store, where there are usually fresh vegetables, meats, eggs and dairy, and to avoid the inner aisles, which usually contain more expensive and less healthy processed foods. If every community makes it easier to be physically active, eat healthfully and live tobacco-free lifestyles, Michigan would be a healthier place to live.”

Governor Jennifer Granholm has declared 2007 to be the “Year of Public Health.” Local health departments throughout the state will be focusing on a different health theme each month of the year in order to showcase the fact that public health agencies are always working to promote healthy lifestyles and to protect families and communities. To learn about past months’ features, visit www.malph.org.

For more information contact Vivian Frudakis, Community Health Educator at the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph CHA, 517-279-9561 ext. 123 Additional information about the “**Public Health – For Michigan. For You.**” slogan and “**2007: The Year of Public Health**” can be found at www.malph.org.

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