

For Immediate Release

Contact Information:
Mary Boyer-Proctor
boyerm@bhsj.org
517-437-7395 ext. 137

Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph
Community Health Agency

2007- Michigan's Year of Public Health Community Health Agency Kicks off "Back to School" Month

Coldwater, Michigan, August 1, 2007-Shuffling your child back to school these days takes more than a new wardrobe and a shiny apple. What about the dizzying array of immunizations? Hearing and vision test? Special instructions for the school nurse? And tips for buying and loading a backpack that will help protect your child's back. (Webmd.com)

For a child going back to school is often a mix of emotions. Along with the excitement about getting a new teacher, seeing their friends and participating in sports most children are worried about not making friends, homework, and missing the fun of summer. While children are worried about going back to school their parents and teachers worry about keeping them healthy, safe and free from infection while in school.

Public Health is always working to protect families and communities. The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency wants to help families and teachers take the right steps in ensuring a "happy and healthy" child. It is important to protect children from common childhood illness. The healthier a child the more prepared they will be to learn.

Making sure a child is up-to-date on all vaccinations, hearing and vision checks and are properly nourished, can give the child a healthy start to the school year. The following are health and safety tips for back to school from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) that can help in preparing your child for that first day:

- Remind your child that he/she is not the only student who is a bit uneasy the first day of school.
- Point out the positive aspects of starting school: It will be fun. He'll/She'll see old friends and meet new ones.
- Find another child in the neighborhood with whom your youngster can walk to school or ride with on the bus.
- If you feel it is appropriate, drive your child (or walk with him/her) to school and pick up on the first day.

“Giving our children a healthy start to the school year is one of the best things we can do in preparing them for “Back to School,” says Mary Proctor, Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency, Outreach Worker/Safe Kids Coordinator. “Parents need to keep their child’s immunizations up-to-date to safeguard against diseases of the past, get their vision and hearing checked on a regular basis, and promote a healthy diet and encourage activity throughout the week.” Families along with schools and communities can work together to make the start of school not only exciting and fun, but ensure that each and every student is sent “Back to School” healthy and ready to learn. Public Health along with Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency are always working to promote healthy lifestyles, because we all pay the price when Michigan is unhealthy.

For information on services offered by the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency such as immunizations, hearing and vision testing or other services please visit our website www.bhsj.org or call one of our 4 offices.

**Sturgis 269-659-4013
Three Rivers 269-273-2161
Coldwater 517-279-9561
Hillsdale 517-437-7395**

Additional information about “Public Health-For Michigan. For You” slogan and “2007 The Year of Public Health” can be found at www.malph.org.