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## **NACo facilitates obesity prevention dialogue with Hillsdale, Branch and St. Joseph counties**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – A select group of more than 30 county, school and community leaders from the Hillsdale, Branch and St. Joseph tri-county area recently participated in a Healthy Schools, Healthy Communities Dialogue to discuss challenges and opportunities for youth obesity prevention.

The day-long session, hosted by the National Association of Counties (NACo), was held Oct. 30 at the Coldwater office of the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency. It was brought to the tri-county area at the request of Hillsdale County Commissioner Ken Lautzenheiser who is president of the Michigan Association of Counties, a member of the NACo Board of Directors and serves on NACo's Rural Action Caucus.

Other local tri-county area officials who participated included: St. Joseph County Commission Chair Robin Baker and Branch County Commissioner Dale Swift.



The dialogue was facilitated by members of NACo's Leadership for Healthy Communities team, Casey Dillon and Christina Rowland.

Lautzenheiser said obesity and related conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, higher medical costs and absenteeism affect all three counties.

"I would like to see over the next two to three years a tri-county effort to educate our residents about the importance of weight management and to promote active lifestyles nutritious food choices," Lautzenheiser said. "This session was a great opportunity to begin that process and I thank the National Association of Counties for agreeing to host a dialogue session here."

The dialogue was part of NACo's work with Leadership for Healthy Communities. Leadership for Healthy Communities is a coalition of local government organizations that advance policies to support healthy eating and active living and is supported by The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

NACo President Eric Coleman, commissioner, Oakland County, Mich., said, "Not only does obesity threaten the health of our citizens and stand to impose tremendous financial costs to governments and the private sector, it is intricately related to many of the challenges facing our modern communities. In order to prevent obesity and to help our citizens achieve healthy weight management, we must create communities that enable and facilitate healthy living."

For more information about the dialogue, please contact Steve Todd of the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency at 517-279-9561 ext. 148 or Casey Dillon of NACo at 202-942- 4242.