



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph
Community Health Agency**

**Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency
Kicks off “Reduce Your Risks” Month**

Coldwater, March 1, 2008 – 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 Community Health Agency, 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 Mary Proctor Community Outreach Worker. “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 Proctor. “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.”

The environment in which we live also affects our health. The Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) recommends that each community, township, city or village have a Community Health Coalition, which can be a new launch or an expansion of an existing community group, as long as they include interdisciplinary representation from community leaders who can assist with supporting and implementing physical activity, nutrition, tobacco-free programs, policies and changes in the environment.

“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,” said Proctor.

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The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency, your local health department is committed to promoting wellness, preventing disease, providing health care and protecting the environment. For information on how to quit smoking contact our Tobacco Reduction Action Coalition Coordinator, Kelley Mapes at 517-279-9561 ext.103. For information on other services we provide to “Reduce Your Risks”, visit our website at <http://www.bhsj.org>

Additional information about the “**Public Health – For Michigan. For You.**” slogan can be found at www.malph.org.

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