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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Eating Green!

(Coldwater, MI) There is so much talk about going green these days, but what about eating green? The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency would like to remind women of childbearing age or women who are pregnant to eat plenty of dark green, leafy vegetables, such as:

- Spinach
- Lima Beans
- Broccoli
- Cauliflower
- Asparagus
- Green Peas
- Brussels Sprouts
- Collard Greens

These vegetables are high in Folate, the natural occurring form of Folic Acid. Folate and Folic Acid are also known as vitamin B-9. Studies show that women who eat a diet high in Vitamin B-9 are at a reduced risk for having babies with birth defects.

According to Jo Ann Wilczynski, Prevention Services Director for the District Health Department, "Vitamin B-9 is sometimes referred to as the healthy baby vitamin. By taking in at least 400 mcg of Vitamin B-9 either through a vitamin supplement and/or by eating folate-rich foods, a woman can significantly reduce the chances of having a baby with a brain or spinal cord birth defect, or birth defects of the heart, lip or mouth. Ideally, this intake should begin prior to conception"

Other food sources high in Vitamin B-9 include:

- All enriched grain products, including: rice, breads, corn meal, corn grits, pasta, and cereal
- Beans
- Liver such as chicken or beef liver
- Other fruits and vegetables

Jo Ann adds “Many of these foods are available for free to eligible pregnant women, breastfeeding moms and their young children through our WIC program.”

[WIC](#) stands for Women, Infants and Children. It is a health and nutrition program geared to assist low and moderate income pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum women and infants. Children up to age 5 who have an identified nutrition-related health problem may also qualify. Nutrition-related health problems include:

- Being anemic;
- Being overweight or underweight,
- Having an underlying chronic disease like asthma;
- Not meeting certain growth milestones; and
- Eating an inadequate diet.

The program provides supplemental food (i.e., coupons that can be redeemed at the local grocery store for formula, juice, milk, cheese, cereal and other nutritious foods); nutrition education with a dietician, and screens for health concerns. The program can also make referrals for ongoing health issues.

Applying for the WIC program is easy to do and can be done at one of the many WIC clinics offered during the week. Please call your local county health department office to schedule an appointment.

The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency offers many valuable free or low cost health services. Please go to the agency's website at <http://www.bhsj.org> to learn more about how these services can assist you in staying healthy this New Year!

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