

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

**November 10, 2011**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Local Health Department Receives MDCH Director's Award!**

**(Coldwater, MI)** The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency was one of three local health departments awarded the 2011 Michigan Department of Community Health's Director's Award for its Project SLIC (Saving Lives of Infants and Children). The presentation occurred during the Michigan Premier Public Health Conferences' Awards Program held on October 13, 2011 at the DeVos Place in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Project SLIC is a traffic safety program which uses certified car seat technicians to instruct parents on how to safely install their car seats into their vehicles. It also teaches them why using a car seat is important for their child's safety and when to transition to the next level of safety seats. The program provides car seats free of charge to income eligible families who cannot afford a car seat or who are in need of specialty seats due to weight and size considerations.

The program is a part of the local Safe Kids Coalition Branch-Hillsdale St. Joseph County. According to Mary Boyer Proctor, health department outreach worker and Safe Kids Coordinator "Between 2006 and 2010, the program conducted 94 events and has conducted 1,725 car seat checks. In 2010 alone, the program provided 232 seats to income eligible participants across the three counties." Steve Todd, Health Officer commented "The program is an excellent example of both public health at work and of community collaboration. We know that without the tri-county area Safe Kids Coalition, and the dedication of our local law enforcement, businesses, hospitals, health and human service agencies, child abuse prevention networks and other community

volunteers, this program would not be possible. We gladly accept this recognition on their behalf.”

Safe Kids Coalition, Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph County is dedicated to reducing death and injury to children ages 14 years and under by empowering families and community through education, collaboration and advocacy. Currently, the local coalition contains 50 active members, 38 volunteers and over 50 community partners work tirelessly to educate the community and promote proper child passenger safety restraints, bike helmet usage and safety awareness through public service announcements, news releases, health fairs, community festivals, school events and car seat checks. The coalition is part of Safe Kids USA and Safe Kids Worldwide.

To learn more about local Safe Kids Chapter, the car seat program or general safety awareness, visit the health department’s website at [www.bhsj.org](http://www.bhsj.org).

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