

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

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **So This Is What 40 Looks Like!**

**Coldwater, MI.** This is the time of the year for making merry, attending parties and singing carols. It is also the time to reflect, to consider what once was and sing Auld Lang Syne -- "Days long ago." It's the time for making resolutions – to correct the past; change the present; and grab the reins on the future. It's during these gray days that are dotted with colored lights and falling snowflakes that we can clearly see how the past, the present and the future are intertwined. This is true for individuals and for families but can also be true for organizations. It's with these images in mind, that the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency selected this time to celebrate its 40<sup>th</sup> year anniversary as a district health department.

The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph District Health Department can trace its beginnings to the mid-1930's when the Kellogg Foundation was active in assisting local county governments in establishing local health departments. Certain county commissioners realized early on that benefits could be attained through collaboration and coordination of public health responsibilities and in the 1940's Branch and Hillsdale counties formed an association, which was later expanded to include St. Joseph County. Finally, on January 1, 1972, by mutual resolution, the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph District Health Department came into existence, thus solidifying the commitment of the three counties to work together to preserve, protect and promote the public's health.

During these past 40 years, the health department has seen many changes – changes in locations, leadership and the health issues that affect our communities, but every step of the way, it has strived to remain local, to provide excellent service and to be innovative as it seeks to make health improvements within the tri-county area.

According to Steve Todd, Health Officer for the Community Health Agency, “I have been with the agency since 1974, first as an intern and then as a food sanitarian. Like several staff here, I have worked my way up through the chain of command and have witnessed first-hand the many changes that have occurred since the local health department’s inception. Each decade during the last 40 years has faced its own unique set of trials and offered its own unique opportunities for growth, as well as netted its own accomplishments.”

As a way of celebrating these important milestones, the tri-county agency has set up displays in each county to commemorate the role that public health plays in safeguarding the health of the community. The theme of the displays is “BHSJ CHA – Celebrating 40+ Years of Service.” Displays are going up during the week of Dec. 10th at the following locations and will be available until mid-January:

- Lower Level of the Branch County Courthouse: 31 Division Street, Coldwater, MI
- Children’s Section, Hillsdale Community Library: 11 E. Bacon St., Hillsdale, MI
- St. Joseph County Courthouse: 125 West Main, Centreville, MI

In addition, the health department is issuing a set of articles that will take a nostalgic look at each of the past four decades, highlighting its important challenges and accomplishments. We invite you to walk down memory lane with us as we review the past 40 years. I think you will agree, 40 is looking pretty good!

To learn more about your local health department and how we can better serve you, check out our website at [www.bhsj.org](http://www.bhsj.org).

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