

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

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**Rebecca Burns, Health Officer, BHSJ CHA**  
517-279-9561, ext. 0148#  
**Kim Wilhelm, Prevention Services Director**  
517-279-9561, ext. 0143#

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **February Designated As Children's Dental Health Month – Sugar Wars**

**Coldwater, MI.** The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency, in conjunction with My Community Dental Centers (MCDC) and local dentists, reminds you to give your child a smile that lasts a lifetime. February is National Children's Dental Health Month, which brings an increased focus on the importance of regular dental check-ups and a balanced diet. The theme of this year's campaign *Sugar Wars* urges children to defeat the effects of sugar and maintain good oral health by brushing, flossing, rinsing, and eating healthy snacks.

"Children's teeth are meant to last a lifetime, and a healthy smile is important to a child's self-esteem" said Kim Wilhelm, Prevention Services Director at the tri-county health department. "Good health habits should begin with an introductory visit to the dentist after their first tooth erupts or before your child's first birthday. This will help to make sure your child has a Super Smile. A balanced diet, limited snacks, daily brushing and flossing and regular check-ups are the keys to healthy teeth and gums." Additionally, bottles and pacifiers also impact your child's oral health. Here are some tips from the American Dental Association to keep your young child's mouth healthy:

- Place only formula, milk or breast milk in bottles. Avoid filling the bottle with liquids such as sugar water, juice or soft drinks.
- Infants should finish their bedtime and naptime bottles before going to bed.
- If your child uses a pacifier, provide one that is clean—don't dip it in sugar or honey, or put it in your mouth before giving it to the child.
- Encourage children to drink from a cup by their first birthday and discourage frequent or prolonged use of sippy cups.

- Serve nutritious snacks and limit sweets to mealtimes.

Older children should follow the same rules of regular brushing, flossing, dental visits and eating a balanced diet, and avoiding sugary beverages like juice and soft drinks. Sugars and starches encourage the production of plaque which can attack tooth enamel. Also, it's not just the sugar in soft drinks that decays teeth; it's the acid too, making this double trouble.

The MCDC Clinics located in Hillsdale, MI and in Three Rivers, MI are operated by My Community Dental Centers on behalf of the tri-county health department and focus on serving persons enrolled in Medicaid and low-income uninsured. Both of these clinics are accepting new patients and encourage dental visits by age one. This creates a positive experience and establishes a dental home before problems arise.

To learn more about the MCDC Clinics, as well as other oral health services available through the health department, go to our website at [www.bhsj.org](http://www.bhsj.org) and click on the blue Dental Clinic button located on the left side bar. Or to schedule an appointment, please call 1-877-313-6232.

**Branch County**  
570 N. Marshall Rd.  
Coldwater, MI 49036  
(517) 279-9561,  
ext. 0105#

**Hillsdale County**  
20 Care Drive  
Hillsdale, MI 49242  
(517) 437-7395  
ext. 0307#

**Three Rivers**  
1110 Hill St.  
Three Rivers, MI 49093  
(269) 273-2161  
ext. 0241#

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