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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### **A Well-Cooked Feast – Now That’s Something to be Thankful for!**

**Coldwater, MI** –Thanksgiving is right around the corner, closely followed by Christmas and New Year’s. Chances are you will be carrying food from one location to another. While sharing dishes at family gatherings is fun, it can also mean more opportunity for bacteria to grow and cause food poisoning. Whether you’re an experienced cook, a first-time host, or simply adding a dish to the potluck lineup, the holidays can make even the most confident chefs nervous.

According to Paul Andriacchi, Environmental Health Director for the tri-county health department, “One in six Americans will experience a foodborne illness this year, many during the holiday season. Incorporating safety measures into your food handling now, can reduce your chances of having to spend part of the holiday at the doctor’s later.” To help keep your holidays healthy, the Branch-Hillsdale St. Joseph Community Health Agency recommends the following food safety tips to protect yourself and your family from foodborne illness:

#### **Tips to follow during holiday grocery shopping:**

- Keep raw meat, poultry and seafood away from other foods in your grocery cart.
- Buy cold foods last.
- Ask the cashier to place your raw meat, poultry and seafood in a separate bag.

**Tips to follow during food preparation:**

- Place raw meat, poultry and seafood in a shallow dish and store separately on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator to prevent cross contamination.
- Use separate cutting boards for raw meat and ready-to-eat items like vegetables or bread.
- Prepare uncooked recipes before recipes requiring raw meat to reduce cross-contamination. Store them out of the way while preparing meat dishes to ensure they don't become contaminated after preparation.
- Use a meat thermometer to check the internal temperature of dishes to ensure they are fully cooked and safe to eat. Fresh beef, pork, veal, and lamb should be cooked to 145 °F; fish should be cooked to 145 °F; ground beef, veal and lamb should be cooked to 160 °F; egg dishes should be cooked to 160 °F; and all poultry should be cooked to 165 °F.

**Fool proof tips when cooking for groups:**

- Keep hot food hot and cold food cold, using chafing dishes or crock pots and ice trays. Hot items should remain above 135 °F and cold items should remain below 40 °F.
- Use several small plates when serving food.
- Discard perishable foods left out for 2 hours or more.

**Tips to follow when cooking a holiday bird or roast:**

- Use separate cutting boards, plates and utensils for raw meats and cooked meats.
- Wash items such as cutting boards that have touched raw meat with warm water and soap, or place them in a dishwasher.
- To ensure the juiciest possible bird or roast this holiday, use a meat thermometer. Roasts are safe to eat once they have reached the recommended internal temperature of 145 F. Birds (chicken, turkey, duck or other fowls) are safe to eat when the thermometer (inserted into the innermost part of the thigh, leg and thickest part of the breast) reaches 165 F.
- Be sure to allow time for your meat to rest before cutting or consuming. The amount of time needed depends on the type of meat and/or size of the entree. Large turkeys and roasts should rest between 15 to 30 minutes prior to serving which helps retain their juices and flavor.

For further tips regarding food safety this holiday season, check out our website at [www.bhsj.org](http://www.bhsj.org), or call your local health department's county office and ask to speak to a food sanitarian. You can also call the USDA Meat and Poultry hotline at 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854) or chat live with a food safety specialist at [AskKaren.gov](http://AskKaren.gov). These services are available from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday, in English and Spanish. They are also available on Thanksgiving Day!

Andriacchi adds "Good food, good friends, good health - on behalf of the staff from the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency - we wish you all three this holiday season!"

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