

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

When: March 14, 2005

Who: **The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency**

What: **World TB Day – March 24, 2005**

World TB Day, held on March 24th each year, is an occasion to raise awareness about the international health threat presented by tuberculosis (TB). Many people think TB is a disease of the past. But, TB is still a leading killer of young adults worldwide. Some **2 billion people** – one-third of the world's population – are infected with the TB bacterium. In a world where travel to distant (or not so distant) countries is commonplace, the awareness of TB and its transmission is important in stopping the spread of this disease. Many persons travel routinely to countries where TB is much more common than here in the U.S.. India, China, Brazil, and even Mexico are experiencing much higher rates of TB infection than the U.S. Additionally, persons immigrate to the US each year from many of these countries, carrying (often unknown) the disease.

World TB day is a day to recognize the collaborative efforts of all countries involved in fighting TB. TB can be controlled, and, with diligent efforts and sufficient resources, eventually eliminated.

TB Facts:

- **One-third** of the world's population is infected with TB.
- Each year, **9 million people** around the world become sick with TB.
- Each year, there are over **2 million TB-related deaths** worldwide.
- TB is the leading killer of people who are HIV infected.
- Once infected, a healthy person's immune system will 'wall off' the disease, so that they may not show any symptoms of the disease.

Risk Factors for contracting TB

- Recent contact to persons with TB disease
- Persons with suppressed immune systems due to HIV, organ transplant, long term steroid therapy, chemotherapy, etc.
- Travel to countries where TB is common (India, China, Brazil, etc)
- Injection drug users
- Residents and employees in high risk settings (jails, prisons, shelters, etc.)
- Certain medical conditions (diabetes, gastric bypass patients, etc.)

Want to know more, possibly about a skin test or facts about the disease? Visit our web site at www.bhsj.org and click on clinic services and then communicable disease. Additionally, you can call our Communicable Disease Coordinator at 517-279-9561 x141.