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Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph
Community Health Agency

Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency Kicks off New Year with Healthy Beginnings Month

Coldwater, Michigan, January 01, 2008 - Good health before pregnancy helps to protect a baby's growth and development. January is designated as "Healthy Beginnings" month, and Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency officials are reminding women to take good care of themselves before, during, and after pregnancy to give their babies a healthy start.

"Long before a woman is ready to be pregnant, the decisions she makes, such as using effective family planning methods and taking steps to prevent sexually transmitted diseases and HIV, help her chances of having a healthy pregnancy," said Mary Proctor Community Outreach Worker.

Once a woman is pregnant, the Community Health Agency offers services to help ensure a healthy baby, especially for low-income women.

"We offer the Infants and Children (WIC) Nutrition Program, not only because we care about women and babies but because they are good investment", said Proctor "In fact, for every dollar spent on WIC, \$3.50 is saved in future costs; saving lives means saving dollars."

Good nutrition prevents many health problems in babies. The best food for most babies is breast milk. Breast-feeding lowers a child's risk for many types of infections and allergies and may also help protect children from some health problems, such as eczema and asthma. Health Department officials encourage moms to breastfeed until their babies are 12 months old, or longer.

"The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency is always working to promote healthy babies, encouraging good nutrition, sleep routines, and lots of TLC", said Proctor. "Promoting healthy babies also means making sure parents know they need to secure their child in a car seat when riding in a motor vehicle."

Despite the best preparation, some babies are born with disabilities. Then, Health Department staff coordinates Children's Special Health Care Services, which provides financial assistance for health care for certain medical conditions, with other services from Intermediate School Districts, hospitals, and others in the community.

The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency is committed to promoting wellness, preventing disease, providing health care, and protecting the environment. For additional information about our services visit our website www.bhsj.org or call one of our four offices.

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Additional information about the "Public Health – For Michigan. For You" slogan can be found at www.malph.org.