

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

**December 15, 2011**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Local Tobacco Reduction Efforts Recognized!**

The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency, through its Tobacco Reduction Action Coalition (TRAC), is working hard with area school districts to establish 24/7 tobacco-free school health policies. These policies, which include protection against newly emerging tobacco products, are part of its efforts to support healthy and tobacco-free learning environments for children. Kelley Mapes, Community Health Educator with the Health Agency was recently recognized for her efforts at October's Tobacco Free Michigan (TFM) meeting with an award.



**(Steve Todd, Agency's Health Officer congratulates Kelley Mapes, Community Health Educator during December, 2011 Board of Health Meeting)**

Working in conjunction with the Coordinated School Health Program, Kelley assisted North Adams Jerome Public Schools to become the first school district in the state to adopt a comprehensive tobacco-free school policy. According to Regina Calcagno, TFM Policy Director, "The adoption of this policy is important and serves as a

model for other schools across the state. This policy prohibits the use of ALL tobacco products and tobacco promotions in all school-related situations at ALL times. The policy covers traditional items like cigarettes, cigars, and chew, as well as the "emerging" products: such as snus, hookah, e-cigarettes, and orbs."

Steve Todd, Health Officer for the tri-county health agency stated "We are so proud of Kelley and of North Adams Jerome Public Schools. Tobacco continues to be the leading cause of all preventable deaths in this nation. Each year on average, 443,000 people in the United States die from cancer, heart disease, stroke, COPD and other causes that can be traced back to either their use of tobacco or their exposure to second hand smoke. We hope that the adoption of these policies will help us to help those who are tobacco users, while encouraging those who are not, to stay tobacco-free."

According to the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH), one in five tri-county adults reported being a current smoker (BRFS 2008-2010); and the Michigan Department of Education reported that approximately one in six tri-county high school students reported smoking cigarettes during the past 30 days (2009/10 MI Phy Survey Results).

TRAC is a grant-funded coalition which seeks to improve the health of the people in Branch and Hillsdale Counties by encouraging the elimination or reduction of tobacco use through education prevention & empowerment. This active coalition consists of 11 member agencies and includes representatives from:

- Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency
- South Central Michigan Works
- Hillsdale County Substance Abuse Coalition
- Hillsdale County United Way
- Hillsdale Community Health Center
- Hillsdale/Branch ISDs
- Child Abuse, Prevention and Awareness (CAPA)
- Healthy Beginnings
- American Cancer Society
- Youth Engaged in Prevention

Kelley Mapes has been the project's coordinator since 2006. She is a certified smoking cessation trainer and has been employed by the district health agency for 18 years. Kelley states "Working on this issue has been so rewarding. I can't thank my community partners enough for all their hard work. It's encouraging to know that we are making a real impact." To learn more about the agency's tobacco reduction efforts or how to access smoking cessation resources, please contact the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency or check out our website at: [www.bhsj.org](http://www.bhsj.org).

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