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For Media Release:

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January is Cervical Health Awareness Month

The Northern Michigan Public Health Alliance (NMPHA) and Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department (BLDHD) are joining the nation in observing January as Cervical Health Awareness Month. It is a time to raise awareness about cervical cancer, Human Papillomavirus (HPV) disease, and the importance of getting screened. BLDHD is reminding residents that cervical cancer is nearly 100% preventable with recommended vaccinations and routine screening.

HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI); 85% of people will get an HPV infection in their lifetime. HPV is a known cause of cervical cancer, as well as some anal cancer, throat cancer, and genital warts.

With the availability of the HPV vaccine, we can protect against the virus that causes more than 90% of cervical cancers. An HPV test can also detect the presence of this virus before cancer develops. By regular screening with a Pap test (alone or in conjunction with an HPV test), your doctor can detect precancerous conditions in the cervix, or detect the cancer in early stages. When cervical cancer is found early, it is highly treatable and associated with long survival and good quality of life.

"Medicine has given us incredible life-saving tools in the form of highly accurate screening tests and safe, effective vaccines. We have the means to prevent cervical cancer," said Dr. Joshua Meyerson, BLDHD's Medical Director.

The vaccine is recommended for individuals aged 9-26 years. If your teen has not received the vaccine yet, talk to their doctor about getting it as soon as possible. When given as recommended and before exposure to this common virus, it is highly effective.

Most health insurances cover the HPV vaccine, including Medicaid and the Healthy Michigan plan. If you or your child do not have insurance that covers vaccines, contact BLDHD by calling 231-882-4409 ext. 3 for low-cost vaccine options.

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