

Media Release

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Community Action Partnership receives funding for lead testing for low-income children from Dugdale Trust (Sept. 3, 2008)

(Sept. 3, 2008) Community Action Partnership of Greater St. Joseph recently received funding from the Harold Dugdale Charitable Trust, U.S. Bank trustee, to purchase a blood lead analyzer, lead test kits and blood iron-level test kits for children enrolled in the Head Start early child development program.

“The floors, walls and even outdoor play areas a child uses can be contaminated with harmful levels of lead, and we’re very grateful to the Dugdale Trust for allowing us to purchase this valuable equipment,” said Gretchen Herndon, Director of Head Start, Community Action Partnership of Greater St. Joseph. “Now we can administer blood and iron tests ourselves on a consistent, reliable schedule for each child – creating the best protection possible from the consequences of lead poisoning, including lead-related delays in school success,” said Herndon.

According to the Administration for Children and Families, part of the U.S. Dept of Health and Human Services, low-income and Medicaid-eligible children are nearly five times more likely to have harmful blood lead levels than the general child population. Extremely high levels of lead can result in seizures, coma, even death. Lead poisoning can affect a child’s brain, kidneys, bone marrow and other body systems, and children often do not display obvious symptoms of elevated lead levels. The best way to detect elevated lead levels is through a blood test. Research also shows a strong link between low levels of blood iron in children and high levels of lead. Iron testing will also be administered to students enrolled in Head Start.

Once a child reaches 24 months of age, Medicaid no longer pays for lead testing. Community Action Partnership will offer the lead and blood iron-level testing at annual Head Start screening events, along with dental, vision, blood pressure and developmental screenings.

“By the time children reach the age of 3, research indicates it may be too late to reverse some lead poisoning effects,” said Herndon. “We are pleased to work with parents to meet the federal requirement that every enrolled child receives a lead screening test between the ages of 3 years and 72 months.”

Head Start employs a full-time nurse on its staff to conduct the lead and iron tests and assist with remediation. A pediatric nurse practitioner serves on the Head Start Advisory Council.

In partnership with Hillyard Technical School’s nursing program, the Head Start staff plans to help train future nurses – increasing the likelihood that more children can be tested across the community. Pregnant mothers can also be screened, whose babies may be at risk for lead poisoning through the mother’s blood.

For more information about Community Action Partnership’s lead and iron screenings, or Head Start, **(more)**

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contact Dannette Peters, BS, C, LPN, Head Start, at (816) 233-8281, ext. 114.

Community Action Partnership has provided programs to move low-income families out of poverty since 1964, serving nearly 16,000 people in poverty in Northwest Missouri. Head Start is one of the core programs managed by the agency, and there are 12 Head Start centers available to low-income families across Northwest Missouri. The Head Start child development program strives for success for the whole family, and is currently serving 500 low-income children in the Northwest Missouri area. Additional services provided by Community Action Partnership to low-income families include utilities assistance, affordable housing, financial literacy and home ownership classes, life skills and workforce training.

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