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Asthma Affects One in 15 Minnesota Children

Twin Cities' 'Asthma Project' shows promising results in improving lives of children with asthma

April 30, 2007 – Asthma is the leading serious chronic illness among children in the United States, and among the top 10 emergency department diagnoses for children in the Twin Cities. In Minnesota, more than 79,000 children – one in 15 – have asthma.

Uncontrolled asthma diminishes children's health, increases school absenteeism, causes parents to miss work, and increases health care costs.

During the month of May, Asthma Awareness Month, the American Lung Association of Minnesota, the Controlling Asthma in American Cities Project, Minnesota Department of Health and Minnesota Asthma Coalition are joining forces to raise awareness about asthma.

With the help of a compelling, localized ad campaign about pediatric asthma from the Ad Council, the Controlling Asthma in American Cities Project (Asthma Project), hopes to encourage families of children with asthma to get the help needed to prevent asthma attacks, improve school attendance, and reduce costly emergency room visits.

The Asthma Project, a coalition of 60 partners focused on improving pediatric asthma care in the Twin Cities, has spearheaded interventions in the areas of professional education and health systems, schools, community, and health policy.

“By bringing together the community's expertise, we have improved the way pediatric asthma care is managed,” said Jill Heins Nesvold, Director for the American Lung Association of Minnesota and one of the lead partners on the Asthma Project. “The results are better and more cost-effective health care for children.”

Measurable changes seen in children with asthma

Several of the Asthma Project's interventions have shown measurable improvement in the lives of children with asthma. Key partners in this effort were the Minnesota Department of Health, City of Minneapolis Regulatory Service, St. Paul Ramsey County Health Department and the American Lung Association of Minnesota. One intervention in particular, which assesses environmental triggers in the home and makes modifications, has seen very promising results. The effort was funded by three different federal grants by the Centers for Disease and Prevention (CDCP), Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

A home assessment includes a visual inspection of the inside and exterior of the home. During the inspection, the resident may walk through the property with the assessors and receive education on environmental concerns.

For example, residents may not realize that mold spores may be distributed throughout the home if a forced air furnace is being used, and furnace filters may be a necessity. Similarly, the resident may not realize that if gutters do not have runners to direct water away from the home, the level of moisture in their basement is affected which increases molds, a common asthma trigger.

Home assessments typically result in a variety of modifications. The most commonly provided products include vacuums, air cleaners, bed encasements, and CO and smoke detectors. The most common structural modifications include sheet rock removal, caulking, and correction of ventilation problems.

In follow-up visits with the families, Asthma Project evaluators found that the children's use of asthma inhalers was down, as were hospitalizations and trips to the emergency department. In addition, children whose homes were part of the assessment also showed improved school attendance. Since October 2003, partners with the Asthma Project have conducted assessments and made modifications to more than 400 homes of children with asthma.

Minnesota Asthma Events During May, Asthma Awareness Month

Several statewide events focusing on asthma research, education and fundraising are planned:

- Governor Tim Pawlenty and Duluth Mayor Herb Bergson will issue proclamations recognizing Asthma Awareness Month.
- The second annual **Minnesota Asthma Walk** will be held at Boom Island Park in Minneapolis on Sat., June 2. Call (651) 223-9561 for details or visit www.asthmawalk.org/.

Minnesota Asthma Resources

American Lung Association HelpLine

1-(800) LUNG-USA or 1-(800) 548-8252

American Lung Association Health House program asthma tip sheet

http://www.healthhouse.org/tipsheets/TS_asthma.pdf

(Spanish version) ALA Health House program asthma tip sheet

http://www.healthhouse.org/tipsheets/TS_spanishasthma.pdf

Minnesota Department of Health Asthma Program

<http://www.health.state.mn.us/asthma/>

Minnesota Department of Health Interactive Online Asthma Plan

<http://www.health.state.mn.us/asthma/ActionPlan.html>

Minnesota Asthma Information Center

www.ALAMN.org/InfoCenter

Minnesota Asthma Coalition

<http://www.mnasthma.org/mnasthma/>

The Controlling Asthma in American Cities Project, funded by a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), is a coalition of 60 leading health, education, public policy, and community partners focused on improving pediatric asthma care in the Twin Cities. The Asthma Project, the largest project of its kind in the region, provides data and a replicable, successful model for pediatric asthma care. For more information, please visit <http://www.alamn.org/americancities/>.