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PUBLIC HEALTH ANNOUNCES HEALTHY WORKPLACE AWARDS

Nominations Invited from Local Businesses Investing in Healthier Workplaces

YPSILANTI, Mich., March 6, 2013 – Washtenaw County businesses that are investing in a healthier workplace for their employees are encouraged to apply for a Healthy Workplace Award. The online nomination survey takes about 10 minutes and is available at http://s.zoomerang.com/s/hwhealthyworkplace or by visiting the Public Health web site. Nominations will be accepted until 5:00 pm on Friday March 22, 2013. Awards will recognize small and large businesses that are promoting healthy behaviors in the workplace, such as physical activity or healthy eating, through wellness programs or other strategies. Local honorees will be announced in conjunction with National Public Health Week.

National Public Health Week is observed annually during the first week of April. This year's theme is public health's return on investment, or ROI: "Public Health is ROI – Save Lives, Save Money." Workplaces that invest in employee health improve productivity; reduce the risk of chronic illness; and, ultimately, save money.

Honoring local businesses that are making critical investments in their employees' health is the perfect way to celebrate Public Health Week in Washtenaw County. "If you can build exercise and healthy eating into your daily routine, you are more likely to stick to whatever program you start," says Alice Penrose MD, MPH, Medical Director of Washtenaw County Public Health.

Research demonstrates that worksite wellness programs are capable of producing significant improvements in employee health. The Harvard Business Review notes that "The ROI on comprehensive, well-run employee wellness programs is impressive, sometimes as high as six to

one," which benefits the economic health of these companies as well as employee health (December 2010).

In general, healthcare costs continue to rise. Unhealthy behaviors and resulting illnesses are contributing to these costs. Michigan spent an estimated \$3.1 billion in obesity related medical costs in 2008. It is projected Michigan will spend \$12.5 billion in obesity related medical costs in 2018 if obesity rates continue to increase at their current levels (from "Overweight and Obesity in Michigan: Surveillance Update 2011"). In Washtenaw County, the percentage of adults who are overweight or obese has increased over time. More than 60% of local adults are now overweight or obese, according to the 2010 Health Improvement Plan Survey (available at http://hip.ewashtenaw.org).

Washtenaw County Public Health promotes health and works to prevent disease and injury in our community. Visit us online at http://publichealth.ewashtenaw.org.

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