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NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH WEEK IS APRIL 1st-7th

Washtenaw County Public Health Honors Local Businesses with Healthy Workplace Awards

YPSILANTI, Mich., April 1, 2013 – In observance of National Public Health Week, Washtenaw County Public Health is honoring five local businesses for their investment in employee health. The honorees represent large and small businesses that are promoting healthy behaviors in the workplace. The 2013 Healthy Workplace Award winners are:

- Bank of Ann Arbor
- City of Ann Arbor
- Growing Hope
- Kaiser Optical Systems, Inc.
- Whole Foods Market

“Our efforts to promote wellness in the workplace are having positive benefits to our cost structure,” notes James Miller, Director of Human Resources at the Bank of Ann Arbor. “Even with the exponentially rising cost of healthcare, our year-over-year health care costs per employee have remained flat,” he continued.

Award winners offered strategies that can help adapt wellness programs to a variety of worksites. Miller advises, “Make certain that your program is supported and led by senior leadership.” The use of internal “Wellness Champions” to promote wellness programs is also recommended. Linda Reiher, Senior Systems Engineer and Wellness Champion at Kaiser Optical Systems says “Our site has two employees who serve as Wellness Champions to help facilitate and deploy the corporate wellness initiatives.” Finally, employee feedback is always critical according to Casey VanNest of Growing Hope, where a staff survey was conducted: “Staff were able to give their

recommendations . . . to help them achieve their wellness goals such as classes or on-site health screenings and workshops. They also gave their opinions on topics they would be interested in learning more about.” She concludes, “Listen to your staff. You may be surprised at what they have to say.”

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.

In general, healthcare costs continue to rise. Unhealthy behaviors and resulting illnesses are contributing to these costs. In Washtenaw County, the percentage of adults who are overweight or obese has increased over time. Worksite wellness programs offer a promising approach to curbing this trend by integrating regular physical activity or other healthful behaviors into the workday.

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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