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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Public Health Invites Applications for Healthy Workplace Awards** *Local Businesses Investing in Healthier Workplaces Encouraged to Apply*

YPSILANTI, Mich., February 6, 2014 – Washtenaw County Public Health is looking to honor local businesses that are investing in a healthier workplace for their employees. Local Healthy Workplace Awards recognize small and large businesses that assist their employees in reducing unhealthy behaviors and encourage healthy behaviors. The nomination survey takes about 10 minutes and is available at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/W6YJFYG>. Applications are due by 5:00 pm on Saturday, March 15, 2014. Winners will be announced during National Public Health Week, April 7-13, 2014.

National Public Health Week is observed annually during the first week of April. This year's theme is "Public Health: Start Here" and focuses on the evolving public health system. The Affordable Care Act (ACA), for instance, signals a shift from a system that focuses on treating the sick to one that is committed to keeping people and their communities healthy and safe.

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.

Public Health is the starting point when taking steps towards making a healthier and stronger community. In 2014, the ACA will have a significant impact on public health. The ACA includes the Prevention and Public Health Fund, which provides funding for state and local prevention efforts, including worksite wellness. Senator Tom Harkin, Chairman of the Health, Education, Labor and Pension Committee, said in a statement: "In past years, resources from the Fund have

been diverted to other healthcare purposes. This year, the omnibus allocates 100 percent of the resources from the Fund to prevention and wellness activities” (January 16, 2014 <http://www.harkin.senate.gov/press/release.cfm?i=349327>).

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>). The workplace is a key starting point when working to implement prevention and wellness activities. Workplaces that take strides toward creating a positive and healthier work environment improve productivity; reduce the risk of chronic illness; and ultimately, have employees with better health outcomes. More information about Washtenaw County Public Health and the Healthy Workplace Awards is available at <http://publichealth.ewashtenaw.org>

Washtenaw County Public Health promotes health and works to prevent disease and injury in our community.

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