IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact Information:
Kelly Rumpf, 779-7234

Health Department Kicks off “Better Hearing and Speech Month” During May 2014

Kingsford and Iron River, MI – May 1, 2014 - Many children and teens these days have a smart phone and/or a tablet. Parents or caregivers need to make sure that they aren't listening to music, watching television shows, and playing games on these devices using head phones or earbuds at dangerously high volumes —it can lead to noise-induced hearing loss.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) urges parents to help protect their kids with a few simple safe listening tips during Better Hearing and Speech Month (May):

- Keep the volume down. A good guide is half volume.
- Limit listening time. Everyone’s ears benefit from a break.
- Model good listening habits. Practice what you preach—for your kids’ sake and your own.

Mobile technology use is pervasive in today’s society and is becoming ingrained in children at younger and younger ages. Parents have a tremendous opportunity to start children off right by establishing safe listening behaviors early. While we want everyone to enjoy their mobile devices, we also want them to enjoy the gift of hearing for many years to come.

The ASHA notes that hearing loss in young people is on the rise. A 2010 study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association showed 1 in 5 kids ages 12–19 is suffering from hearing loss, an increase of 31 percent since the late 1980s/early 1990s.

Hearing loss can affect academic achievement, vocational choice, and social functioning—such as feeling isolated or unhappy in school. Hearing is critical to a child’s development, and the earlier hearing loss occurs, the more serious is the effect on speech and language development, communication, and learning.

Do you know the signs of childhood hearing loss?

It is critical that, in addition to teaching preventative habits, parents learn the early signs of hearing loss so they can seek help if needed. The earlier hearing loss is identified and intervention begins, the better the outcome. Early warning signs include:

- Lack of attention to sounds
- Failure to follow simple directions

- More -
Delays in speech and language development
Difficulty achieving academically, especially in reading and math
Persistent ear discomfort after exposure to loud noise (regular and constant listening to electronics at high volumes)

More signs, treatment options, and other information are available via ASHA’s new public education campaign, Identify the Signs, at www.IdentifytheSigns.org.

The Dickinson-Iron District Health Department regularly holds hearing and vision clinics at all Dickinson and Iron County schools for grade school children. To learn more about the Health Department’s Hearing and Vision Program, please call 774-1868 or 265-9913.

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