MEDIA RELEASE

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ARIZONA TO HOST NATIONAL INFANT IMMUNIZATION WEEK

Arizona has the honor of being chosen as the launch state for this year’s National Infant Immunization Week from April 24th to 30th. The National Immunization Program of the Centers for Disease Control has spent this same week in a border state, to highlight the joint efforts of the United States and Mexico in the Vaccinate the Americas initiative. Their visit gives Arizona the opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to children’s health and wellness.

In addition, Yavapai County Community Health Services (YCCHS) is the proud recipient of the “Hot Shots” Award, a state-wide program sponsored by The Arizona Partnership for Immunizations (TAPI) that recognizes vaccination providers for innovation in service delivery. Specifically, YCCHS was acknowledged for its adult pertussis cocooning project which has increased awareness within the community as well as providing valuable protection against whooping cough for infants.

Vaccines are one of history’s most successful and cost-effective public health tools for preventing serious disease and death. Diseases that were once common-place, such as polio, measles, mumps, whooping cough, small pox, diphtheria, and rubella, are now only distant memories for most Americans. Today, there are few reminders of the suffering, disabilities, and premature deaths caused by diseases that are now preventable with vaccines.

The importance of childhood and adult immunizations can best be explained with an example. Pertussis, better known as whooping cough, has been in the news in recent months – neighboring states have experienced outbreaks in children and a significant number of infant deaths have occurred. Pertussis is a respiratory disease caused by bacteria that is spread through the air by coughing and sneezing. Infants are the most vulnerable to pertussis because they tend to get more severely ill and often require hospitalization with this infection. Sadly, most infants who contract pertussis catch it from a parent, family member or close caregiver, because these adults were never vaccinated or their immunity to the disease has waned over time. The cocooning program involves giving the Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis) immunization to adults who are in contact with infants younger than one year of age. This helps to ensure children will be protected from pertussis before they receive full immunity through vaccines they are given.

Low immunization coverage is an issue that impacts the entire community. Therefore, community resources and, more importantly, community participation is essential to increasing immunization coverage. A decision to vaccinate is a decision to not only protect each child, but to also protect the community by reducing the spread of disease. For more information about National Infant Immunization Week and pertussis vaccines visit www.YavapaiHealth.com or http://azdhs.gov/phs/immun/.

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