



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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COMMISSIONERS HIGHLIGHT COUNTY HEALTHCARE SERVICES

Franklin County will celebrate National County Government Month (NCGM) during the month of April to highlight essential county government healthcare services and programs. The theme for this year's celebration is "Healthy Counties."

"Franklin County is proud of the healthcare services and programs available to our residents," said Commissioner John O'Grady. "National County Government Month is a great opportunity for the public to take a closer look at what we do, how we do it and to meet the people behind the services we provide."

The Commissioners' 2010 General Fund Budget allocated \$4.2 million to health care access for county residents.

The Budget included a new community partnership with the Charitable Pharmacy of Central Ohio, Inc. which is a nonprofit organization formed specifically to create and operate a pharmacy of last resort for the uninsured and others who are unable to pay for discounted medications. The partnership is estimated to benefit 1,500 clients and 6,500 prescriptions will be dispensed.

The Commissioners also provide continued support to Columbus Neighborhood Health Center's to ensure the delivery of primary care services in a medically underserved areas including, support for the Veterans Dental program, created in 2008, to provide basic primary dental care for eligible Veterans and/or their spouses in the County.

Last year, Commissioners announced an unprecedented \$7 million over 5-years to fund clinical research and community outreach efforts to prevent premature births, the leading cause of death for newborns in Franklin County. The funding will support a new community prevention initiative – Ohio Better Birth Outcomes (OBBO) – which is a collaborative effort between the county's health systems, government, community organizations and Nationwide Children's Hospital.

"It costs families and taxpayers up to \$2 million to provide lifelong care for a premature child. The premature birth rate of one in five for high risk mothers is one of the most serious health care challenges our county is facing. Our partnerships with Nationwide Children's Hospital and

the Southside Health Center are helping to improve the lives of our youngest citizens,” said Commissioner Paula Brooks.

Each year the Franklin County Board of Health provides vaccinations for children, adults and the elderly. The National Immunization Survey found that coverage for children ages 19–35 months increased in Franklin County from 73.7% in 1997 to 87.1% in 2005.

The Franklin County Board of Health also conducts inspections of local restaurants and businesses. In addition to restaurants staff also inspects tattoo and body piercing establishments, public swimming pools and spa schools, RV parks and campgrounds and manufactured home parks.

As a community, Franklin County has a robust healthcare system, with a total of 12 hospitals, 5,250 hospital beds and nearly 4,000 physicians. Central Ohio hospitals treat more than 3.3 million patients annually and healthcare services employ over 114,000 people.

Six of Franklin County’s top 40 employers are in the healthcare industry. They are Ohio Health, Nationwide Children’s Hospital, Mount Carmel Health, Medco Solutions, Aetna, Inc. and Cardinal Health. Together these six companies employed over 22,000 people in 2008.

“Franklin County government is an integral part of our community healthcare system. We have a unique responsibility to both finance and deliver health services through community partnerships, public health clinics, local health departments, mental health services and substance abuse treatment, and coverage programs for the uninsured,” said Commissioner Marilyn Brown.

Since 1991 the National Association of Counties (NACo) has encouraged counties across the country to raise public awareness and understanding about the roles and responsibilities of counties.

Franklin County’s membership in NACo afforded the county the opportunity to participate in a prescription discount program which saves consumers an average of 27 percent on prescriptions.

In April, the Discount Prescription Card will reach a milestone of 50,000 Franklin County users. Since the inception of the program two years ago, users of the card have saved in excess of \$1.3 million.