

DHMH Office of Communications

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**May is Hepatitis Awareness Month:
Get Educated, Get Vaccinated and Get Tested!**
MD Hepatitis Coalition honoring Local Heroes

Baltimore, MD (May 8, 2012) –The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) joins the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Maryland Hepatitis Coalition in observance of National Hepatitis Awareness Month. DHMH also joins the Maryland Hepatitis Coalition in honoring a number of local heroes for their exemplary work and dedication in the battle against this disease.

"Regrettably, most people with hepatitis don't know they are infected because of the asymptomatic nature of chronic hepatitis B and hepatitis C," said Heather Hauck, Director of the DHMH Infectious Disease and Environmental Health Administration (IDEHA). "Treatment can improve and prolong life - getting tested is the first step."

Testing is critical to successfully treating hepatitis. Awareness and prevention are the keys to stopping its spread. Vaccines do exist, and DHMH urges Marylanders to talk with their health care providers about being vaccinated against Hepatitis A and B.

Hepatitis is a group of viral infections that damage the liver and can cause liver cancer. Hepatitis A, B, and C are the most common types of the disease. There are an estimated 3.5 to 5.3 million people living with viral hepatitis in the United States, and millions more are at risk for infection. Hepatitis A or HAV is spread mainly through contact with contaminated food and water, hepatitis B (HBV) is spread mainly by sexual contact, and hepatitis C or HCV is spread through sexual contact and injection drug use.

"Our community partners are critical in the success of addressing hepatitis," said Frances Phillips, Deputy Secretary for Public Health Services. "DHMH commends the Maryland Hepatitis Coalition for honoring community stakeholders, who work to provide hepatitis education and health care programs, through The Hepatitis Heroes of Maryland Awards."

The Hepatitis Heroes of Maryland Awards ceremony is being held today, May 8, 2012, at Baltimore's Healthcare for the Homeless facility. To learn more about the Adult Viral Hepatitis Prevention Program for the State of Maryland and other hepatitis activities in the state, including where you can go to get tested please visit:

<http://ideha.dhmh.maryland.gov/OIDPCS/AVHPP/SitePages/Home.aspx>.

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**NATIONAL HEPATITIS TESTING DAY
FREE HEPATITIS TESTING EVENTS - 2012**

Throughout May, 2012

Frederick County Hepatitis Clinic

350 Montevue Lane
Frederick, Maryland 21701
Constance Callahan: 301-600-3343

- **Free Hepatitis C Screening** throughout May:
Tuesday mornings: 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon
Wednesday afternoons: 2:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

**May 18, 2012 -
8:00 am – 4:00 pm**

Chase Brexton Health Services

1001 Cathedral Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201
Phone number: 410-837-2050

- **Free Hepatitis C Testing:** May 18, 2012
8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

**May 19, 2012 -
7:00 am to 11:00 pm**

Women Accepting Responsibility @ Pennsylvania Market Location

2300 Garrison Blvd., Ste 150
Baltimore, Maryland 21216
410-878-0357

- **Free Hepatitis C Testing** from 7:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. at
**Pennsylvania Market,
1700 Pennsylvania Ave,
Baltimore, MD. 21217**

**May 19, 2012 -
11:00 pm – 3:00 on**

Women Accepting Responsibility @ Lexington Market Location

2300 Garrison Blvd., Ste 150
Baltimore, Maryland 21216
410-878-0357

- **Free Hepatitis C Testing** from 11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m., at
**Lexington Market,
400 W. Lexington St, Baltimore, MD. 21201**

**May 20, 2012 -
3:00 pm – 5:00 pm**

Bethany Presbyterian Church

1201 Quince Orchard Blvd
Gaithersburg, Md., 20878

- **Free Hepatitis B Screening** from 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
- Hepatitis B vaccination will also be available. Services available in English, Spanish and Korean.