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Healthy Places Coalition kicks off lead poisoning awareness campaign

As a way to observe National Lead Poisoning Awareness Week (Oct. 23-29), the Kane County Healthy Places Coalition has launched a unique, multi-prong approach to health promotion as part of a comprehensive Healthy Homes Education Campaign.

The Coalition has partnered with 15 home improvement stores to set up lead awareness displays highlighting their safe lead products while also educating their customers on lead prevention.

The stores are: Ace Hardware in Aurora on Galena Blvd and on Lake Street; Ace Hardware in Batavia and St. Charles, Ziegler Ace Hardware in Carpentersville, South Elgin, in Elgin on Spring Street and on Lillian Street; Home Depot in Aurora and Geneva; Lowe's in St. Charles; Sherwin Williams in North Aurora, Elgin and in South Elgin; and Pittsburg Paints in Elgin. Sales staff have lead tip cards that help them talk to customers about lead safe removal issues and supplies.

The Coalition is conducting a follow up outreach survey to municipalities' permit application departments to collect information on best practices and ways they assure contractors and renovators are receiving education and resources for safe lead removal in pre-1978 homes and buildings.

Hundreds of thousands of children living in the United States have elevated blood lead levels that may cause significant damage to their health. They can develop behavior and learning problems (such as hyperactivity), slowed growth, hearing problems, and aggressive patterns of behavior. Stopping a child's exposure to lead from leaded paint, house dust, or any other source is the best way to prevent the harmful effects of lead. Nearly 600 children in Kane are known to have elevated blood lead levels.

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The burden of Illinois childhood lead poisoning remains one of the highest in the nation. In 2014 alone, 2,279 children had blood lead levels of 10µg/dL or greater and 18,412 Illinois children had blood lead levels at or above the reference value of 5 µg/dL for blood lead established by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). These children are at grave risk for the intellectual, behavioral, and academic deficits caused by lead. The primary source of lead exposure for children is their homes; some 1 million homes in Illinois have lead-based paint hazards that can result in childhood lead poisoning. Low-income and minority children bear a disproportionate burden of this condition caused by unhealthy housing. In Kane County, 49% of our housing stock was built before 1978. To raise awareness of the consequences of lead poisoning among parents and pregnant women who live in these older homes, the Kane County Healthy Places Coalition is participating in National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week October 25-31 to encourage parents to learn more about how to prevent lead poisoning.

Why educate parents of young children ages 1-6 who test positive for lower blood levels of lead, between 5 and 9 µg/dL? Because:

- There is NO safe level of lead in blood
- The American Academy of Pediatricians just published new documents urging increased efforts to protect children from lead since growing evidence shows even low lead levels can cause irreversible mental damages and behavioral problems
- Even low blood lead levels affect IQ, ability to pay attention, and academic achievement
- Lead poisoning affects Kane County children regardless of zip code, income level, race, gender, and Medicaid/non-Medicaid coverage
- 49 % of Kane County homes were built before 1978
- In 2014, 4.3 % of all Kane children insured by Medicaid & tested had blood levels ≥ 5 µg/dL
- In 2014, 3.2 % of all Kane children NOT insured by Medicaid tested had blood levels ≥ 5 µg/dL
- Parents may not be aware that their homes, work & hobbies may present lead hazards for children
- Frequent education and risk assessments at well child visits are vital to keeping kids lead free!
- In 2014, compared to Illinois children tested, Kane County children that were tested had lower rates of blood levels ≥ 5 µg/dL. This is Good News! Let's keep up the good work, because we want our Kane Kids to measure up Lead-free.

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The Coalition partnered with All Our Kids (AOK) Early Childhood Network to distribute colorful lead growth charts and lead posters in the community—at child care centers, doctor offices, WIC programs, and other places young children visit. Additional posters are being mailed to pediatricians.

It takes an entire community to come together to create a great campaign. For more information, visit the Kane County Healthy Places website [here](#). More information about the Health Department’s lead poisoning prevention program can be found [here](#).

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