

Asthma Coalition Receives Regional Award

Lakeland representatives accepted a regional recognition for innovative work as a "Partner for Asthma Action," given by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to the Southwest Michigan Asthma Coalition (SMAC). The award is given to only one coalition per state. There are 11 asthma coalitions in the state of Michigan. Lakeland HealthCare is the lead agency for the coalition.

Lara Lasky of the EPA commented, "The Southwest Michigan Asthma Coalition program really stood out as a newer program that is already doing outstanding work and showing great initiative."

The coalition was nominated for this award by officials of the Asthma Initiative of Michigan (AIM), a statewide network of eleven coalitions, the American Lung Association and the Michigan Department of Community Health because of its success in promoting basic and consistent symptom management through the use of asthma action plans.

According to the Michigan Department of Community Health,

about 10% of Michigan children have asthma. In public middle and high schools, 17% of students report that they have asthma. Those statistics equate to each classroom having one student with asthma. In Berrien County, it is estimated that there are 3,740 children with asthma.

*"The coalition works to connect the family, the physician and the school through a customized plan, so that everyone is responding to a child's asthma symptoms in a consistent manner," commented Lakeland's **Erin Salvagione, RN.***

She leads SMAC, which includes the region's only certified asthma educator, Dennis Peak, RRT, AE-C (staff educator, respiratory therapy, Lakeland). Community partners include the Berrien County Health Department, Benton Harbor school nurses, the Berrien

County ISD, area physicians, several pharmaceutical companies and a number of community participants.

*"We know that physicians have welcomed the action plans," commented **Lowell Hamel, MD,** Vice President, Medical Affairs, Lakeland HealthCare. "They have extended the physician's reach into the areas of a child's life where help can be administered dependably by trained teachers and coaches. The students are leading healthy, active lives. We're all grateful for the success of the program."*



Representing the Southwest Michigan Asthma Coalition, Lakeland's Erin Salvagione, RN and Sandy Hayes, RNC, accept the Partners for Asthma Action award from the USEPA.

¹Michigan Behavioral Risk Factor Survey 2002