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**For Immediate Release**

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**Lead-Free MV Coalition Marks One-Year Anniversary**  
*Highlights Accomplishments and Future Opportunities*

UTICA, NY – On Thursday, April 13, the Lead-Free MV Coalition marked the one-year anniversary of its inception with an event that highlighted the past year’s accomplishments and opportunities ahead.

The coalition was convened by The Community Foundation of Herkimer & Oneida Counties after announcing a \$1 million, three-year commitment in January 2016 to address childhood lead poisoning. Today, the coalition has more than 100 members representing nearly 50 organizations and agencies in Herkimer and Oneida counties. Led by co-chairs Dr. Mark Warfel and David Manzelmann, the coalition is governed by a steering committee and five topic-specific work groups.

First year highlights include:

- The West Utica Healthy Housing Pilot Project was launched in fall 2016 to address lead-related health hazards in a select number of homes in West Utica, a neighborhood prone to higher levels of childhood lead poisoning. The pilot project was born out of the City of Utica’s efforts to obtain a Lead-Based Paint Hazard Control Grant from HUD, seeking to demonstrate the effectiveness of multiple local agencies working collectively to streamline the home hazard remediation process. Partner agencies include the HomeOwnershipCenter, Mohawk Valley Community Action Agency, the City of Utica, Rust to Green Urban Studio, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Oneida County, and the Oneida County Health Department.
- The City of Utica submitted its HUD grant application in March 2017 and, if successful, could earn the community nearly \$3 million in federal funding to implement comprehensive programs that identify and control lead-based paint hazards in eligible, privately-owned rental or owner-occupied housing.
- Coalition partner Herkimer County HealthNet received a two-year, \$50,000 grant from Excellus BlueCross BlueShield through its Community and Member Health Improvement (CAMHI) grant program. The grant seeks to increase lead screening in children by placing LeadCare II blood level testing systems in clinics and physician offices in Herkimer and Oneida counties. Point-of-care testing makes it easier for parents to have their children’s blood lead level tested compared to traditional intravenous methods.
- At the request of EPA Region 2 Administrator Judith Enck, the Lead-Free MV Coalition Steering Committee coordinated a meeting in Utica with representatives from the EPA, HUD

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and US Attorney's Office. Ten representatives from the federal agencies attended the November meeting to discuss lead poisoning prevention resources and strategies.

- Elected officials from Herkimer and Oneida counties marked National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week in a ceremony at the Oneida County Office Building in October 2016. NYS Senator Joseph Griffo, Assemblyman Anthony Brindisi, Oneida County Executive Anthony Picente, City of Utica Mayor Robert Palmieri, City of Rome Mayor Jacqueline Izzo, City of Little Falls Mayor Mark Blask and Herkimer County Legislator Vincent J. Bono were among those lending their support to the awareness effort spearheaded locally by the Lead-Free MV Coalition.
- The Lead-Free MV Coalition hosted a public presentation at Watson Williams Elementary School in Utica with the authors of "Lead Wars: The Politics of Science and the Fate of America's Children" who discussed the history of lead poisoning in America. The presentation also included a panel discussion featuring local lead experts.

In recent years, Oneida County has had one of the highest levels of childhood lead poisoning in the state. And despite a state law requiring early childhood testing for lead exposure, a third of pre-school children in Herkimer and Oneida Counties have not had the required blood test.

"The coalition model has proven to be successful because it allows us to bring together a wide variety of agencies and efforts, helping to create more impactful partnerships," said Alicia Dicks, president/CEO of The Community Foundation. "As a collective, we've been able to leverage the effectiveness of our partners' current strategies and identify opportunities that will allow for even greater outcomes. Lead-Free MV's work has just begun."

If awarded, the Lead-Free MV Coalition will be an integral partner in the implementation of the HUD grant. Future plans also include facilitating a joint meeting of all lead-related coalitions within New York State and advancing public policy changes that promote lead-safe practices.

*Since 1952, The Community Foundation has invested more than \$65 million in Oneida and Herkimer counties. The Community Foundation partners with various local organizations to make impactful investments in core areas of need, including economic development, education, health, and arts and culture.*

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