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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Asthma Awareness Month

Did you know that May is Asthma Awareness Month? Asthma is a medical condition that affects the airways in our lungs and makes it difficult to breathe. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), about 1 in 8 people will be diagnosed with asthma during their lifetime. Symptoms of asthma include shortness of breath, tightness in the chest, coughing, and wheezing. Additionally, symptoms may get worse at night and wake the person up.

From 2018 to 2020, residents of the City and Town of Batavia went to an emergency department for asthma symptoms 169 times, according to the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) Asthma Dashboard. This was almost half of the emergency visits for asthma in all of Genesee County. The medical cost of these trips can be expensive, but family members also lose money from missed time at work and school and the cost of transportation. The medical and indirect costs can be thousands of dollars each year for a person with asthma, according to the CDC AsthmaStats.

However, there are ways to control asthma symptoms and reduce these costs. People with well controlled asthma are less likely to have attacks that need emergency treatment. Asthma may be controlled by:

- Taking a daily controller medication
- Avoiding triggers such as mold, dust, cigarette smoke, or scented products
- Using an inhaler before exercising

It is important to pay attention to the warning signs of an asthma attack. These include a runny or stuffy nose, increased mucus, an itchy neck or chin, and feeling tired. Children may say their tummy hurts, have dark circles under their eyes, seem more tired or irritable than normal, and have pale skin or red cheeks. Many people with asthma will be prescribed both a daily medicine and a quick-relief medicine to use during an asthma

attack. It is important to talk to your primary care provider (PCP) about when to take medications and to create an asthma action plan. An asthma action plan is a written plan that lists steps to take during an asthma attack. The plan notes what symptoms trigger using a quick-relief medicine and how long to wait before taking an extra dose or trying another medication to stop the attack. It lists when to call your PCP and when to seek emergency care.

The Genesee County Healthy Neighborhoods Program (HNP) offers free home assessments to residents of the City and Town of Batavia. These assessments look for conditions that could worsen asthma, along with other safety risks in the home. Participants who have been diagnosed with asthma receive education on asthma symptoms and triggers. For more information on the Healthy Neighborhoods Program, call 585-344-2580 ext. 5555 or visit www.GOHealthNY.org.

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