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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

Colorectal cancer, also known as colon cancer, is the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the United States. Colon cancer occurs when cells in the colon or rectum grow uncontrollably. Abnormal growths, known as polyps, can occasionally develop and certain polyps may eventually develop into cancer. Polyps can be found by screening tests and be removed before they become cancerous. Colon cancer is preventable, with the proper screening and education.

Some of the risk factors for colorectal cancer include:

- Inflammatory bowel disease such as ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease
- A personal or family history of colorectal cancer or colorectal polyps
- Lifestyle factors that include overweight and obesity; not being physically active; certain types of diets such as a diet low in fruit and vegetables, a low-fiber and high-fat diet, and a diet high in processed meats; tobacco use; and alcohol use

Colorectal cancer may not cause symptoms right away and some people have no symptoms. Some of the symptoms may include:

- A change in bowel habits
- Blood in or on your stool (bowel movement)
- Diarrhea, constipation, or feeling that the bowel does not empty all the way
- Discomfort in the stomach area such as cramps, gas, or pain that do not go away
- Unintended weight loss
- Weakness and fatigue

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), about 90% of people whose colorectal cancers are found early, diagnosed and treated appropriately are still alive five years later. "Getting screened plays a big role in saving lives by preventing cancer and slowing

its progression when it is found,” stated Paul Pettit, Public Health Director for the Genesee and Orleans County Health Departments (GO Health).

Colorectal cancer screening among adults aged 50–75 years – 2020	
Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)	
<u>County</u>	<u>Percentage (%)</u>
Genesee County	75.5%
Orleans County	73.3%
Wyoming County	74.4%

“In recent decades, screening rates among older adults has significantly increased which is great news,” stated Laura Paolucci, Public Health Administrator for the Wyoming County Health Department. “However, current data indicates that individuals lacking health insurance or a primary care provider are undergoing screening procedures less frequently.”

For eligible men and women, the Cancer Services Program offers free screenings for breast, cervical, and colon cancer. To learn more, call 716-278-4898. If you live in New York State and need health insurance, you can contact the New York State of Health Official Health Plan Marketplace by phone at 1-855-355-5777 or online at <https://nystateofhealth.ny.gov/>.

The most effective way to reduce your risk of colorectal cancer is to get screened for colorectal cancer routinely, beginning at age 45. Residents are also encouraged to increase their physical activity, keep a healthy weight, limit alcohol consumption, and avoid tobacco. Although more research is needed to understand why, the incidence of colorectal cancer is growing among people younger than 50. If you have concerns about this, speak with your healthcare provider.

For more information on Health Department programs and services:

- Genesee County Health Department at: 585-344-2580 ext. 5555 or visit their website at GOHealthNY.org. Follow GO Health on Facebook, Instagram, and X (formally Twitter) at GOHealthNY.
- Orleans County Health Department at: 585-589-3278 or visit their website at GOHealthNY.org. Follow GO Health on Facebook, Instagram, and X (formally Twitter) at GOHealthNY.
- Wyoming County Health Department at: 585-786-8890 or visit their website at <https://www.wyomingco.net/203/Health-Department>. Follow Wyoming County Health Department on Facebook and Instagram by searching ‘Wyoming County Health Department’.

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Resources:

American Cancer Society, (2014, January 17). Key Statistics for Colorectal Cancer. <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/colon-rectal-cancer/about/key-statistics.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Population Health. (2022) PLACES Data. <https://places.cdc.gov/?view=county&locationIds=36037,36073,36121>

National Cancer Institute. Why is Colorectal Cancer Rising Rapidly among Young Adults? <https://www.cancer.gov/news-events/cancer-currents-blog/2020/colorectal-cancer-rising-younger-adults>

New York State Department of Health. (2022, March 3). New York State Department of Health Reminds New Yorkers to Get Screened for Colorectal Cancer. https://www.health.ny.gov/press/releases/2022/2022-03-30_colon_cancer_month.htm