March 23, 2010

News Release

For Immediate Release

World TB Day is March 24, 2010-TB Elimination: Together We Can!

March 24th is World TB Day and commemorates the date that Dr. Robert Koch announced the bacteria that causes tuberculosis or TB. TB is a disease caused by the bacterium Mycobacterium tuberculosis. This disease normally attacks the lungs, but can affect other areas of the body as well. It is spread through the air when individuals with active tuberculosis disease cough, sneeze, or talk. Symptoms of active disease include: a cough lasting longer than 3 weeks, chest pain, coughing up blood, fatigue, weight loss, chills, fever, and night sweats. TB disease can cause serious illness or death unless it is treated.

TB has existed in the population for many years and has been found in prehistoric human remains from approximately 7000 BC. Currently, an estimated 1/3 of the world’s population is infected with the TB germ. However, the distribution of TB is not consistent worldwide. Approximately 80% of individuals residing in Asia and Africa test positive for TB in contrast with the United States where 5 – 10% test positive for the TB germ. Greene County saw a slight increase in the number of persons infected with the TB germ between 2007 and 2008. Infection case rates in Greene County in 2008 were 147.8/100,000. Individuals infected with the TB germ may later develop tuberculosis disease and then spread the disease to other people. Persons with a weakened immune system are at higher risk of progressing to disease once they are infected with the TB germ. TB disease is the leading killer among those infected with HIV.

The health department provides treatment to individuals with tuberculosis infection and to those with tuberculosis disease. A follow-up investigation is conducted to identify people who may have been exposed to someone with tuberculosis disease. Nurse case managers meet with clients on a routine basis during treatment to ensure their medication is taken properly. Case management is available at no charge to those who have tuberculosis infection or disease.

For questions or more information on tuberculosis, please call Kendra Williams at 417-864-1408 or visit our website at www.springfieldmo.gov/health/tuberculosis.html.

For more information contact Katie Towns-Jeter MPH, Public Information Administrator, 417-874-1205.