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News Release

For Immediate Release

Greene County Flu Reporting Begins Dec. 4

The first confirmed flu case of the 2012-2013 flu season has been reported to the Springfield-Greene County Health Department. The department will begin weekly updates on the number of flu cases starting on Tuesday, Dec. 4. Those updates can be found on the homepage of the department's website at health.springfieldmo.gov.

Remember: **It's never too late to get a flu shot.** It takes about two weeks after being vaccinated for the immune system to fully develop antibodies against the seasonal flu. Getting vaccinated now will help protect against the flu for the rest of the season. Even if you got vaccinated last year, it is important to get vaccinated again this year to protect from changing flu viruses.

Scientists and public health professionals agree that present vaccines are the best intervention available for seasonal influenza. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends everyone over the age of 6 months be vaccinated, especially if they fall into high-risk categories that include: young children, pregnant women, seniors, and people with chronic health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease and lung disease. People who are caregivers for those in high risk categories or for infants 6 months of age or younger should also be vaccinated.

The Springfield Flu Immunization Coalition's free flu clinics for uninsured adults have ended for the season. The best option for adults without insurance through the rest of the flu season is with their healthcare provider, if they have one, or at retail locations and pharmacies. The Flu.gov website is a good tool to find these locations. Out-of-pocket costs are typically about \$30 or less for those without insurance. This is a small investment compared to the cost of missing several days of work or school, or making others sick.

Pregnant women, children and those in close contact with infants less than six months old can receive a shot at no cost at the health department's Westside Public Health Center, 660 S. Scenic Ave. Call (417) 874-1220 to make an appointment or use the walk-in clinic hours from 7:30-10 a.m. on Tuesdays.

Flu can spread from one person to others in close proximity. In addition to vaccination, there are a number of things every person can do to help prevent the spread of flu by practicing proven disease prevention methods. This includes:

- Washing your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer and then wash your hands with soap as soon as you are able.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. This is how germs are spread.

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick, stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone, without using fever-reducing medicine. Most healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning 1 day before symptoms develop and up to 5 to 7 days after becoming sick. Children may pass the virus for longer than 7 days. Symptoms start 1 to 4 days after the virus enters the body. That means that you may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick.
- Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions about illness.

More information about flu can be found online at health.springfieldmo.gov/flu or at www.cdc.gov/flu.

For more information, contact: Mike Brothers, Public Information Administrator, (417) 874-1205.