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Give Children the Gift of Health Insurance
Delaware County Council and CHIP Coalition
Announce Holiday Outreach Campaign

Under the platters of eggs, bacon and bagels are large, colorful placemats reminding families about the Pennsylvania Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

The CHIP placemats were displayed at a breakfast event, hosted by Delaware County Council and members of the local CHIP coalition Tuesday, Nov. 30, at the Coffee Station in Morton. The event kicked off a holiday campaign to encourage families to give the gift of health insurance to their children. The coalition is even enlisting Santa's help when he's visiting with children at the Franklin Mint Federal Credit Union in Media on Dec. 17.

The placemat is one of several outreach efforts undertaken by County Council, the Delaware County Chamber of Commerce, and the coalition, *Insuring Delaware County's Children, Today*. The goal is to ensure that all Delaware County families are aware of and have access to CHIP, and to increase enrollment in the program that provides health insurance for children and teenagers.

The coalition's holiday flier reads: **"Does your child need the gift of health insurance this holiday season."**

The breakfast was attended by County Council and members of the CHIP coalition. The Coffee Station, owned by John and Barbara Paciotti, is one of several family-style restaurants that use the CHIP placemats.

"This outreach is a continuation of Council's program that we launched in 2007 to reach out to families at the grass roots level," said Council Chairman Jack Whelan. "We recognize that families are facing increasing pressure in today's economy. Their circumstances can change at any time, and we want to be sure that every Delaware County child is insured."

There are many reasons that children might not have health insurance, including unemployment, lack of health insurance at work, or the expense of insurance, Whelan said. There is no income limit for CHIP. Depending on their circumstances, some families might get CHIP for free, while others get it at low cost.

Delaware County Council's CHIP outreach initiative is organized through the county Department of Intercommunity Health Coordination, which has representation on the countywide task force.

Insuring Delaware County's Children, Today was organized in November, 2005, when enrollment in CHIP was 4,600 kids. The countywide outreach campaign was launched in 2007. Today, enrollment is 8,193. The enrollment numbers for CHIP statewide are down compared to three months ago and one of the reasons cited is lack of awareness. State funding to conduct education and outreach has been eliminated at a time when it's critical to inform families because their circumstances can change.

State Sen. Edwin B. Erickson secured the funding for the CHIP placemats, which are distributed through the Chamber and the coalition.

(more)

(CHIP outreach continued)

“As a coalition, we’ve been conducting outreach for five years,” said Mike Brady, president of the Delaware County Chamber of Commerce. “This is a true, long-term commitment on the part of the Chamber, County Council and the coalition. Our countywide initiative has been cited in the Commonwealth as a model for other programs because we’ve had success, and we have to keep the message going to continue to reach families.”

PA CHIP provides free, low-cost or at-cost health insurance for children, up to age 19, whose families earn too much to qualify for Medical Assistance, but don’t have access to private health insurance. This insurance covers doctor’s visits, immunizations, hospital care, prescriptions, vision and dental exams.

Since CHIP became available in Pennsylvania in 1992, feedback from the community indicates that families either don’t know about the program or they are intimidated by the application process.

“The most important thing is to let families know that there is available health insurance for their children. We’ve heard from families who just didn’t realize they qualify and we know there are families who recently lost their coverage due to the job market,” Whelan said. “Our goal is to reach those families at all of the points where they might interact with county government.”

Whelan said Council is continuing to inform families about CHIP through the Family Court division, Domestic Relations and Child Care Information Services.

In addition to the placemats, members of the coalition did outreach at Back-to-School events in September and they provide information at health fairs.

Holiday season outreach efforts include:

- The CHIP placemats will be utilized at the cafeteria in the County government center during the month of December.
- CHIP fliers will be distributed to the 28 member libraries through the Delaware County Library System.
- Community organizations can get a free CHIP Outreach in a Box, which features a full display of materials, including a banner, that can be utilized at health fairs, school programs or community events. The CHIP display is available by calling the Chamber of Commerce at (610) 565-3677.
- Holiday-themed CHIP fliers will be distributed at Santa’s workshop, 3-5 p.m. Friday, Dec. 17, at the Media branch of the Franklin Mint Federal Credit Union on State Street. Interested families are invited to stop by and get information when their youngsters visit Santa Claus.

For Information:

- For information about the Pennsylvania Children’s Health Insurance Program, visit www.chipcoverspakids.com or call 1-800-986-KIDS.
- For information about Delaware County’s outreach initiative to educate families about CHIP, call the Department of Intercommunity Health at (610) 891-5311 or visit the Delaware County government Web site at www.co.delaware.pa.us.
- Restaurants interested in utilizing the placemats can contact Trish McFarland at the Delaware County Chamber of Commerce, (610) 565-3677.

Insuring Delaware County’s Children, Today

Members of the Delaware County CHIP coalition include: Delaware County Council, the County Department of Intercommunity Health Coordination and the Delaware County Library System, Chamber of Commerce, Delaware County Medical Society, Delaware County Intermediate Unit, Crozer Keystone Health System, Mercy Health System, the Caring Foundation, AETNA, Americhoice of PA, PathWays Pa, Goodwill Industries, United Way and the Council of Governments.

