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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

To: All Media
From: Emily Nelson, Public Health Nursing Services Manager – Bay County Health Department
Date: March 24, 2023
Re: **Bay County Health Department Recognizes World Tuberculosis Day**

BAY COUNTY, MICHIGAN – World Tuberculosis Day is an annual observance to highlight the date in 1882 when Dr. Robert Koch announced his discovery of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, the bacillus that causes TB. TB is the world's deadliest infectious-disease killer. While the United States has reported the lowest number of TB cases on record, too many people still suffer from TB. Bay County has had four active TB cases diagnosed between 2018 and 2022.

Common symptoms of TB disease are persistent cough (lasting more than two weeks), fever, night sweats, unexplained weight loss, chest pain and coughing up blood. TB bacteria can spread through the air from one person to another. When a person with infectious TB disease of the lungs or throat coughs, speaks, or sings, TB bacteria can get into the air. People nearby may breathe in these TB bacteria and become infected. When a person breathes in TB bacteria, the bacteria can settle in the lungs and begin to grow. TB can also move through the blood to other parts of the body, such as the kidney, spine, and brain and is usually not infectious. People with infectious TB disease are most likely to spread it to people they spend time with every day: family members, friends, coworkers, or schoolmates.

Not everyone infected with TB bacteria becomes sick. As a result, two TB-related conditions exist: latent TB infection (LTBI) and TB disease. Both LTBI and TB disease can be treated. LTBI can lie dormant for years without a single symptom. Without treatment, LTBI can progress to TB disease. The CDC reports that more than 80% of TB cases in the United States result from longstanding, untreated LTBI, and estimate that up to 13 million people in the United States are living with LTBI.

Those at high risk for being infected with TB bacteria should be tested for TB infection, including:

- People who have spent time with someone who has TB disease, especially infants and children
- People from a country where TB disease is common (most countries in Latin America, Caribbean, Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and Russia)
- People who live or work in high-risk settings (i.e., correctional facilities, long-term care facilities or nursing homes, and homeless shelters)

The Bay County Health Department offers TB blood testing by walk in or appointment, Monday through Friday, from 8:30 am to 3:00 pm. For more information, contact the Family Planning Department at (989) 895-4015. TB tests are generally not needed for people with a low risk of infection with TB bacteria.

If you are diagnosed with LTBI, there are short and convenient treatment options available that can help protect you from getting sick with active TB disease. The Communicable Disease Department at BCHD provides surveillance and case management of TB disease and LTBI. For questions or additional information, please call (989) 895-4003. You may also find more information about TB and LTBI at www.cdc.gov/tb

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