

News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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“Safer in the Shade” for Skin Cancer Awareness

May is Skin Cancer Awareness Month. The Partnership for a Healthier Carroll County is focusing on skin cancer prevention and detection in 2008 because Carroll County has skin cancer rates significantly higher than the rest of Maryland. Melanoma, the most serious form of skin cancer, has more than doubled in the past 25 years.

To help spread the message of using sun safety measures to reduce the risk of skin cancer, the Partnership's cancer work group organized a shade-tree planting project at the Carroll Non-Profit Center in Westminster on April 22, 2008. Work group members and volunteers joined the Non-Profit Center staff and the Head Start children in planting the last of ten trees received through a grant from “Tree-mendous Maryland” of the Dept. of Natural Resources. The planting of the first 9 trees was donated by “Outside Unlimited, Inc.” of Hampstead. Their employees planted seven red maples and two flowering Japanese cherry trees and prepared the hole for the children to complete the planting of the last red maple tree.

The Catholic Charities Head Start children and staff received hats from the Partnership and sang the “Sun Safety Pokey” which reminded them to “put your hat on, take your shades out and put your sunscreen on”. The students learned this from their classroom training from the Cigarette Restitution Fund Program staff from the Carroll County Health Department and Carroll Hospital Center. The information was part of the Maryland Sun Safety Curriculum provided by the Maryland Skin Cancer Coalition. Packets of sun safety information and sunscreen were provided for parents and guardians of all 122 Head Start students.

Another addition to the project was the donation of a picnic table by R. D. Bowman and Son, Inc., arranged by Lou Yeager of Catastrophic Health Planners, Inc. to place under the trees which will eventually provide shade for visitors and Head Start children. At the event, skin cancer awareness materials were provided by the American Cancer Society and the Joanna M. Nicolay Melanoma Foundation, which is housed at the Carroll Non-Profit Center. Many of the adult participants were skin cancer survivors and hope to help spread the message of prevention and early detection.

The goal of ACS and the Partnership is to have at least 75% of Carroll residents using at least two skin protective measures, including the use of sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher, wearing protective clothing such as a hat, sunglasses and long sleeves, avoiding the sun between the hours of 10:00 and 4:00 and avoiding tanning beds. Research indicates that skin cancer develops over years and is often the result of sunburns in early years. Tanning bed exposure to ultraviolet light is also very damaging to the skin. Protection and early detection is the key to reducing skin cancer.

Information on sun safety will be available at displays at Safe Kids Day and Teen Scene, both part of the Westminster Flower and Jazz Festival on May 10.

For more information on skin cancer, go to www.cancer.org (American Cancer Society), www.melanomaresource.org (Joanna M. Nicolay Melanoma Foundation) or www.sunguardman.org (Coalition for Skin Care Prevention in Maryland).