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NEWS RELEASE

May 4, 2009

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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“Safer in the Shade” for Skin Cancer Awareness

Westminster, Md. – (May 4, 2009) – May is Skin Cancer Awareness Month. The Partnership for a Healthier Carroll County is focusing on skin cancer prevention and detection because Carroll County has skin cancer rates significantly higher than the Maryland average. 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 Westminster Elementary School on April 22, Earth Day. The Skin Cancer Prevention Team and volunteers joined principal Tracy Belski, school staff and the first grade children in placing mulch on their tree. Other grades completed the mulching of their adopted trees throughout the day.

Ten trees were purchased by the Partnership through a grant from the Carroll County Forestry Board. The planting of the trees was donated by Living Waters Garden Center in Westminster. Two landscapers from Living Waters spent most of April 24 digging the holes and preparing the ground before planting ten 5 – 10 foot trees around the school’s playgrounds and benches. The shade trees planted were white oak, red maple, honey locust "Shademaster," linden "Greenspire," and tulip poplars.

The first grade classes received hats and sunglasses 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”, along with the costumed mascot Sun Guard Man. Students were taught sun safety classes that morning by staff from the Cigarette Restitution Fund Program, of the 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 were provided for parents of the first graders by the American Cancer Society. The Joanna M. Nicolay Melanoma Foundation provided materials and sunscreen samples at the event.

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 the Safe Kids Day section of the Westminster Flower and Jazz Festival on May 9. Skin cancer prevention materials will be available at the Robby Rally on May 9 from 7 -9 pm at Francis Scott Key High School. This is a fund-raiser to support a local youth battling bone cancer. Local skin cancer prevention members will attend the Melanoma Monday press event on May 4 in Baltimore. Additional events are being sponsored by the Joanna M. Nicolay Melanoma Foundation in May and June.

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).

The Partnership for a Healthier Carroll County, Inc., an affiliate of Carroll Hospital Center and the Carroll County Health Department, is a private, nonprofit community led organization that seeks to build capacity for both health and quality of life improvement.

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