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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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National Fluoride Day Highlights a Century of Cavity Prevention

The Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department (BLDHD), in partnership with the Northern Michigan Public Health Alliance (NMPHA), is recognizing National Fluoride Day on Sunday, Jan. 25 by highlighting the proven role fluoride plays in preventing tooth decay and supporting lifelong oral health.

Fluoride is a naturally occurring mineral found in most water sources that helps strengthen tooth enamel and prevent cavities. Its public health benefits were first recognized more than a century ago, after researchers discovered that naturally occurring fluoride in drinking water significantly reduced tooth decay.

“Oral health is closely connected to overall health,” said Dan Thorell, Health Officer at the Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department. “Preventing cavities helps reduce pain, infection, speech challenges, nutritional issues, and impacts to self-esteem—especially for children.”

History of Fluoride

In 1945, Grand Rapids, Michigan became the first city in the world to add fluoride to its public water supply. After 11 years, cavity rates among Grand Rapids children dropped by more than 60 percent, one of the most significant public health advancements in dental care history.

Today, major health organizations including the American Dental Association (ADA), Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), and the World Health Organization (WHO) support community water fluoridation at a level of 0.7 parts per million (ppm), which has been shown to safely and effectively reduce tooth decay.

Managing Your Family’s Fluoride Exposure

BLDHD recommends the following steps to support healthy teeth at every age:

- Use fluoride toothpaste (a smear for children under 3, pea-sized for children ages 3 and older),
- Ask your dentist about fluoride supplements if your water is not fluoridated, and
- Test private well water regularly for natural fluoride levels.

Preventive dental care is important throughout life, especially for young children who are still developing good oral hygiene habits. Many health insurance plans cover fluoride varnish for children ages five and younger at no cost, helping families access this important preventive service.

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