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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Kane County awarded \$1.04 million to address lead poisoning**

Kane County Board Chairman Karen McConnaughay and U.S. Rep. Randy Hultgren are proud to announce that Kane County has been awarded a \$1.04 million grant by the U.S. Department Housing and Urban Development to address lead-based paint hazards in area homes, and to develop a county-wide Healthy Homes Program. The county is one of only 39 jurisdictions nationwide to receive Federal funding. Local matching funds for the program, totaling \$260,000, will be provided by Kane County and the Cities of Aurora and Elgin.

"We all expect to be safe in our homes, and this funding will directly help Kane County families by providing their children a safe and healthy home environment, where they can flourish without worrying that their own homes are poisoning them," McConnaughay said.

Unfortunately, Illinois leads the nation in the number of lead poisoned children. Outside of Cook County, Kane County has the highest rate of childhood lead poisoning in the state. Nearly 1,500 children in Kane are documented to have elevated blood lead levels and need to have their homes evaluated for lead hazards and have the lead hazards reduced or eliminated.

"Lead poisoning is entirely preventable. The key is stopping children from coming into contact with lead in the first place. When they do, we need to treat those who have been poisoned. It can affect nearly every system in the body, but because lead poisoning often occurs with no obvious symptoms, it frequently goes unrecognized," Kane County Health Department Executive Director Paul Kuehnert. "Here in Kane County we have made steady progress over the last 10 years. Specifically, we have been able to reduce the percentage of children under 6 years old with elevated blood levels to 1 percent in 2010, down from almost 10 percent in 2000. While this is good news, it also shows that we have a ways to go before we reach our goal of 0 percent."

"The Office of Healthy Homes and Lead Hazard Control (OHHLHC) is unique among federal agencies. HUD's Office of Healthy Homes and Lead Hazard Control was established to eliminate lead-based paint hazards in America's privately-owned and low-income housing and to lead the nation in addressing other housing-related health hazards that threaten vulnerable residents," Rep. Hultgren said.

(MORE)

Kane County's program will provide targeted lead poisoning prevention education for parents, landlords and homeowners, and lead training for local contractors looking for work. Over the three-year period of the grant, the county expects to address dangerous lead hazards in approximately 60 high-risk housing units in Kane County.

The program will be administered by the Kane County Office of Community Reinvestment (OCR) in collaboration with the Kane County Health Department (KCHD). Additionally, the county's efforts will be coordinated and financed in partnership with the Cities of Aurora and Elgin as follows:

- The Cities of Aurora (\$120,000) and Elgin (\$118,555) will provide matching funds through their respective Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) programs.
- Kane County will provide matching funds, \$21,644, for contractor training and public education components through its Riverboat Fund (local gaming revenue).
- Additional funding is expected to be leveraged through city- and county-supported housing rehabilitation programs.

Kane County was selected by HUD, in part, because of its successful track-record under the Illinois Department of Public Health's "Get the Lead Out" Program, which ran from January 2007 to September 2010. Because of this experience, the county expects the program to be up and running quickly, providing training to local contractors, education to area residents, and rehab work aimed at improving the lives and health of Kane County children.

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