



# NEWS RELEASE

KNOX COUNTY MAYOR TIM BURCHETT

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **KNOX COUNTY OFFICIALS ANNOUNCE FLU PREVENTION INITIATIVE WITH WALGREENS**

Knox County officials are pleased to announce its partnership with Walgreens to help vaccinate Knox County high school students against the flu. Walgreens has always been active in the community and with the Knox County Schools, and this year they are donating flu vaccinations to the first 3,000 high school students who come into their local Walgreens or Take Care Clinic. Walgreens' generous donation has a monetary value of \$100,000.

"Walgreens' good corporate citizenship is the perfect example of how public/private partnerships benefit the community," said Knox County Mayor Tim Burchett. "This partnership allows Knox County to extend the reach of the Health Department's in-school FluMist program and keep even more kids healthy."

The donated vaccine is intended for high school students, which aren't currently part of the in-school clinic program due to lack of resources. Walgreens' participation ensures underinsured, uninsured and insured students the opportunity to be protected against influenza. Students with insurance are asked to provide that information when requesting their vaccine. No cost will be passed along to the student.

The Walgreens donation also benefits the community in other ways. Just two months ago, Knox County Health Department announced funding changes on the federal and state level that negatively impacted the School-located Influenza Vaccination Clinics (commonly known as the FluMist program). In recent years, high schools have not been included as school-located flu vaccination sites (free flu shots are available to all students at any KCHD location) due to lack of resources and low participation rates in the high schools. Walgreens' vaccination donation allows Knox County to expand the FluMist program outside its current parameters and protect more children.

"Knox County Health Department is fortunate to have many valuable community partners and we are very happy to add Walgreens to the list of organizations stepping up to help children," said Dr. Martha Buchanan, KCHD director. "Walgreens' management has been very enthusiastic about getting involved and innovative in their approach to improving flu vaccination rates among children."



Three thousand high school students can receive a flu vaccination at any Knox County Walgreens or Take Care Clinic location simply by showing their student ID and presenting the Vaccine Administration Record (attached here and also available at <http://bit.ly/QmXJuZ>).

“We’re proud to work with county officials on a program that can help keep students healthy throughout the flu season, while also improving immunization rates for influenza in the community,” said Scott Leslie, Walgreens pharmacy supervisor.

“Walgreens is an enthusiastic participant in the Knox County Schools Partners in Education program and we greatly appreciate their engagement and support over the years,” said Dr. Jim McIntyre, Superintendent of the Knox County Schools. “This significant contribution will help keep our high school students healthy and assist us in providing a safe, healthy, inviting learning environment for all our children.”

“As a parent, I know one of the advantages of the in-school flu vaccinations is the convenience: parents don’t have to take time off work to get their children immunized,” said John Lott, KCHD clinical services director. “With so many locations and extended hours, Walgreens participation will be a very convenient option for high school kids to get protected from flu.”

Knox County’s School-located Influenza Vaccination Clinics (FluMist program) have successfully reduced the amount of flu in the community over the last seven years. Studies have shown – and this community’s experience has borne out – that vaccinating children against influenza keeps them healthy and has a ripple effect through the community that protects young and old alike. Since the inception of the school flu vaccination program eight years ago, only one Knox County school has closed due to flu, and that was in the early days of the H1N1 pandemic due to CDC protocol which was later changed.

“Closing schools due to illness has repercussions throughout the community,” Lott continued. “The impact encompasses lost learning opportunities, lost wages for parents who stay home to care for the sick and lost revenue – not to mention the terrible burden of disease on our community.”

Flu immunization not only prevents the flu, but reduces overall respiratory illness rates, lost work days and doctor visits. Overall, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, having a flu vaccination saves every person \$47, three times the cost of getting your child vaccinated at school. The average person loses \$92 a year in wages from sick days. Every year, the flu causes American workers to miss up to 70 million workdays, or the lifetime work of 6,137 American workers.

Knox County’s in-school influenza vaccination program began in 2004 and was underwritten through a grant from MedImmune, the makers of FluMist, an intranasal flu vaccine which requires no needles. Through careful resource management, public health officials were able to utilize the MedImmune money for more than one year. After that, KCHD leveraged federal and state vaccination programs which provided free vaccine for children to keep the program viable. Suddenly last spring, the federal and state programs which had provided the free vaccine were greatly reduced, leaving the program’s future in jeopardy.

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