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News Release

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Subject: Cervical Cancer Awareness Month

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Cervical Cancer Awareness Month

Licking County, OH – “The month of January is dedicated as Cervical Cancer Awareness Month”, said Joe Ebel, Licking County Health Commissioner. “Each year in the United States approximately 12,000 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer and 3,900 women die from it.” All women are at risk for cervical cancer. It occurs most often in women age 30 years and older, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The cervix is the lower, narrow end of the uterus. It connects the uterus to the vagina (birth canal). Cervical cancer can be detected early with a Pap test and a pelvic exam. When found early, cervical cancer is highly treatable. Women who are at an increased risk of developing cervical cancer are those who:

- *Smoke
- *Have many sexual partners and / or have unprotected sex
- *Have a family history of cervical cancer
- *Have a mother who took a hormone, DES or Diethylstilbestrol when pregnant with them
- *Have the HIV virus
- *Have a sexually transmitted virus, HPV or Human Papillomavirus

HPV infection is the main cause of cervical cancer. Most, but not all, cervical cancers can be prevented by being vaccinated with an HPV vaccine between the ages of 9 and 26. Since the vaccine does not protect against all cancer-causing types of HPV, a Pap test is still needed. All women need a Pap test about three years after they start having vaginal intercourse, but no later than age 21. Beginning at age 30, women who have had 3 normal pap tests annually may get the Pap test every 2 to 3 years. The Licking County Health Department’s Breast and Cervical Cancer Program provides free Pap tests and cervical exams for women who are 40 or more years old and income guidelines.

To help prevent cervical cancer, one should use condoms, stop smoking, be tested regularly with a Pap test, and receive the HPV vaccine, if eligible. For more information visit www.cdc.gov/cancer/cervical or call the Licking County Health Department at (740)349-6535.