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Mayor Barrett Announces Grant from United Way and Milwaukee Health Care Partnership to Support Reduction of Childhood Lead Exposure

\$75,000 grant from United Way, Aurora Health Care, Ascension Wisconsin, Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, and Froedtert and the Medical College of Wisconsin to support purchase of water filters

MILWAUKEE – On Thursday, October 6, Mayor Tom Barrett and Health Commissioner Bevan K. Baker gathered with leaders from the United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County and the health system members of the Milwaukee Health Care Partnership – Aurora Health Care, Ascension Wisconsin, Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, and Froedtert and the Medical College of Wisconsin – to announce funding support totaling \$75,000 to the City of Milwaukee for efforts toward lead risk reduction.

“The City of Milwaukee has aggressively worked to reduce children's exposure to lead hazards, and can report we are seeing the lowest levels on record today,” said Mayor Tom Barrett. “As we work to drive down rates even further by minimizing exposure to all lead hazards, I thank our dedicated community leaders for stepping forward to support this work.”

Through its Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program and the efforts of community partners, the City of Milwaukee Health Department reports that the prevalence of blood lead levels of 10 ug/dL in children under 6 has decreased by 90 percent since 1997, and blood lead levels of 5 ug/dL have decreased by 64 percent since 2003.

As of 2015, 3 percent of Milwaukee children under 6 have blood lead tests at 10 ug/dL and 11.6 percent of children have blood lead tests at 5 ug/dL.

“The City of Milwaukee Health Department is committed to making Milwaukee lead safe for all residents,” said Commissioner of Health Bevan K. Baker. “Through lead paint abatement, effective water treatment, and the control of lead hazards in soil, toys, food and other sources, we can continue to eliminate or reduce exposure to lead in our environment.”

Lead is not found in Milwaukee's source water or public water system. However, lead can enter water as the result of the wearing away of materials containing lead, such as in internal plumbing fixtures or in the service line that brings water to a home. When water stands for several hours or more in fixtures or pipes that contain lead, the lead may leach into the water.

Since 1996, Milwaukee Water Works has safely treated its water to reduce the risk of lead exposure, and Milwaukee water continues to meet EPA testing guidelines. Along with this step, residents who live in homes with lead service lines can take additional steps to reduce their risk of lead exposure, including the use of cold water for cooking and drinking, flushing plumbing when water sits for an extended period, and the use of a water filter certified to remove lead. This is recommended for residents in homes with lead service lines and vulnerable populations in the home.

“Filters are especially important for our most vulnerable populations like young children, pregnant women, and breastfeeding mothers,” said Nicole Angresano, vice president of Community Impact for United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County. “We knew it was important to step up and be part of the solution to ensure the health and safety of our community members.”

(Continued)

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The United Way of Greater Milwaukee & Waukesha County's grant of \$15,000 launched funding support from the area's four major health systems.

Nick Turkal, MD, CEO of Aurora Health Care, who sits on United Way's Board of Directors, recognized the importance of the grant and Aurora Health Care immediately matched United Way's grant amount.

"Clean water is a fundamental component of good health and well-being and everyone deserves access to it," said Nick Turkal, MD, CEO of Aurora Health Care. "We are proud to work with United Way in taking the lead on this very important cause, and are pleased that the other health systems are following suit to help address this critical issue in our community."

"As a healthcare leader in Wisconsin, we are committed to compassionate, personalized care for all, especially those who need it most. Access to healthy drinking water is no exception," said Bernie Sherry, Senior Vice President, Ascension Health/Wisconsin Ministry Market Executive. "Ascension is proud to proactively address viable solutions to childhood lead exposure, which aligns with our mission and the needs of the local community."

"With their small, still-developing bodies and minds, children are uniquely affected by lead exposure. We at Children's Hospital see that impact first hand," said Peggy Troy, President and CEO, Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. "The vision of Children's Hospital is to make sure Wisconsin's children are the healthiest in the nation. And that starts with safe drinking water. We are pleased that the area's health systems have come together for the health and wellbeing of our children and the community."

"Reducing barriers to health and quality of life is a vital responsibility of health care leaders," said Cathy Jacobson, president and chief executive officer of Froedtert Health. "We are proud to be part of this partnership that reflects a deep commitment to a strong future for our city."

The City of Milwaukee is currently developing a plan to make filters accessible to residents who live in properties with lead service lines and have vulnerable populations of children under 6, especially bottle-fed infants, as well as pregnant or breastfeeding women, in the home and may not be able to afford a filter. The [City of Milwaukee Health Department](#) and [Milwaukee Water Works](#) websites have lists of retail faucet filters certified to remove lead.

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