

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Lands Council, SNAP, and the City of Spokane Celebrate National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week October 19th-25th, 2008

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The Lands Council, Spokane Neighborhood Action Programs (SNAP), and the City of Spokane are working together to build awareness of childhood lead poisoning and inviting the Spokane community to celebrate National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week by getting kids and homes tested for lead.

"Over the years, we've learned that there is a lot of lead out there, and it's coming from a lot of different sources," said Kat Hall, Environmental Health Program Director for The Lands Council. "Getting our kids and homes tested for lead is one of the best steps we can take towards prevention."

In celebration of National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week, The Lands Council will be holding free blood lead testing events for kids 6 and under on Tuesday, October 21st from 12:30-3:30 p.m. at the East Central Community Center, and Thursday, October 23rd, from 8-11 a.m. at the Spokane Valley Community Center. Both SNAP and the City of Spokane are offering free home lead testing for qualifying families.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) observes National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week to focus on the importance of educating parents and children about the dangers of lead exposure, especially lead-paint hazards in housing. This year, National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week runs from October 19th-25th. The theme, "Let's Wipe Out Lead Poisoning—Renovate Right!" highlights EPA's new rule to protect families from the dangers of lead dust resulting from renovations and everyday painting and repairs. The rule requires the use of lead-safe paint removal practices to ensure that activities such as sanding, cutting, and demolition do not disburse harmful lead dust into a family's air, food and clothing.

"Census data shows that a majority of Spokane kids under 6 years of age live in Spokane neighborhoods with tons of older homes that might have lead-based paint hazards. In fact, over 80% of Spokane homes were built before 1978, the year that lead-based paint was banned. A 2005 State of Washington study shows Spokane as a high lead poisoning risk for these reasons," said Paul Trautman, Administrator for the City's Lead Safe Spokane program.

Lead is a known toxin with no beneficial function in humans and animals. There is no safe level of lead in the body. Childhood lead poisoning can result in reduced IQs, behavior problems, learning and developmental disabilities, brain damage, anemia, and in some cases, death. Symptoms of lead poisoning can include irritability, headaches, difficulty concentrating, fatigue, reduced appetite, weight loss...or no symptoms at all. Kids in Spokane get lead poisoning by inhaling, eating, or drinking lead that can come from cracking and peeling paint in the home, toys, contaminated beaches on the Spokane River, soils, and old drinking water pipes.

"Lead is no longer a 1970's problem...it's today's problem," said Jill Wheeler, Housing Preservation and Rehabilitation Manager for SNAP's Housing Improvements Division. "While the numbers of lead-poisoned children have declined in recent years, the burden of lead poisoning continues to fall disproportionately on low-income families living in older, poorly-maintained housing."

Parents can help protect their children from childhood lead poisoning by washing their hands frequently, making sure they have a diet rich in calcium and iron, and keeping the home clean and dust-free.

The Lands Council, a Spokane-based non-profit organization, preserves and revitalizes the forests, water, and wildlife of the Inland Northwest. Our efforts to build awareness of childhood lead poisoning

and promote increased blood lead testing stem from the work we started in the mid-1990's to help clean up the Spokane-Coeur d'Alene Basin from a legacy of mining pollution and protect people's health. The Lands Council's environmental health program is carrying out these projects through funding awarded by the EPA CARE (Community Action for a Renewed Environment) and Targeted Lead Grant programs.

For a full schedule of The Lands Council's activities to help prevent childhood lead poisoning in Spokane, please visit http://www.landscouncil.org/water/reducing_lead.asp.

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