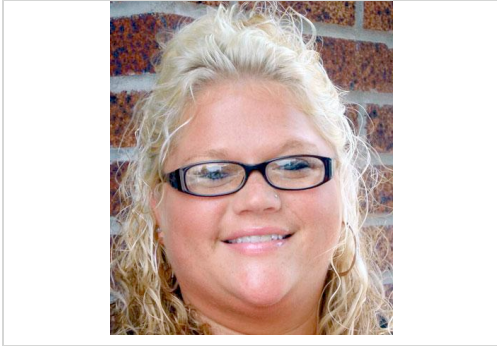


Cass County SHIP coordinator named



Leslie Staker

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Leslie Staker joined Cass County Health, Human and Veterans services by contract March 3 as Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP) Grant coordinator.

She will be leading the Community Leadership Team in efforts to reduce obesity and tobacco use throughout Cass County.

Staker received her bachelor's degree from Bemidji State University and her master's degree in mass communications at St. Cloud State University. She has organized and implemented several health-focused events including Kids' Day America, Creating Wellness and the Bemidji Wellness Challenge.

"As a former wellness coach, I realize the impact of poor health on a person's physical, biochemical and emotional well-being. I am excited to join a program that understands the critical need for increased health in the community," she said.

The Statewide Health Improvement Program was developed in response to the 2007 Minnesota State Legislature's request to develop a plan for statewide health promotion to address the rising cost of health and health care in our state. SHIP tackles the top three causes of preventable illness and death in the United States: tobacco use, physical inactivity and poor nutrition. Together these three factors have been estimated to cause 35 percent of all annual deaths in the United States, or 800,000 deaths each year.

These factors also drive up health care costs. SHIP interventions are projected to save an estimated \$1.9 billion in Minnesota by 2015.

SHIP is a competitive grant process with funding awarded through Community Health Boards and tribal governments across Minnesota beginning in July 2009. Grantees are required to create community action plans, assemble community leadership teams and establish partnerships.

To improve the health of Minnesotans, grantees will utilize policy, systems, and environmental changes in four settings: schools, work sites, health care, and community. Cass County SHIP will focus on obesity and tobacco use and exposure as key risk factors to target interventions in fiscal years 2010 and 2011. Targeting these risk factors through increasing physical activity

and healthy eating and reducing tobacco use and exposure will address the top three preventable causes of illness and death in the United States.

Guiding Cass County SHIP is a Community Leadership Team including members with a variety of backgrounds. The mission of the team is to improve the health of Cass County residents through policies, systems and environmental change in areas of tobacco and obesity.

The Community Leadership team members are Beth Swanson, BiCAP; Jill May, U of M Extension Services; Jon Knopik, MN Council on Aging; Kelly Felton, Working Together Coalition; Leslie Bouchonville, Pine River-Backus Family Center; Paul Jaeger, First National Bank of Walker; Renee Schwaller, community member; Sandy Munson, Walker-Hackensack-Akeley School; and Jamie Richter, Renee Lukkason and Ane Rogers, Cass County Health, Human and Veteran Services.

For more information on Cass County SHIP, contact Staker at (218) 800-2277 or e-mail LSTAKER@yahoo.com.