



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 1-05-11

MEDIA CONTACT: Leslie Kinnee

989-831-3669, kinnee@mmdhd.org

Mid-Michigan District Health Department
615 N. State St., Stanton, MI 48888-9702, www.mmdhd.org

Health Department's nurse practitioner retires

Ithaca, Stanton, St. Johns- Russette "Rusty" Higgins, Mid-Michigan District Health Department's (MMDHD) Nurse Practitioner, is retiring *again*.

Higgins first retired from MMDHD in 2000 after 15 years of employment. She started as a nurse in 1985 in the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and Family Planning programs. "As a nurse I felt a connection with the clients and felt I could help them make good decisions," she said.

Following her passion, in 1988 she earned her Nurse Practitioner certification from Planned Parenthood in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and began her new role at MMDHD.

Higgins retired in 2000, but found her way back to MMDHD in 2005.

Higgins has definitely made an impact on those she has served. Many clients travel long distances just to see Higgins. "Rusty provides great service; that's why my sisters and I drive 50 miles to MMDHD," said one family planning client. "We love Rusty and hate to see her leave." Others have been impacted in far greater ways.

"I've had several young ladies tell me how I have helped them and how much they appreciate it. One lady in particular, sticks out in my mind because she credits me with saving her life. She was in an abusive relationship and every year when she came in for her check-up, we'd talk about it. She finally fled to a shelter with her children and was relocated. It took her five years, but she earned her bachelor's degree, and is now totally supporting herself and her children. This is what I am proud of. This is what I will remember."

Rusty's last working day was December 22. While she says she will greatly miss the MMDHD staff and wonderful clients, she is looking forward to her second, and final, retirement. She plans to spend time with her two daughters, five grandchildren, toy fox terrier Dottie and travel with her husband.

"MMDHD has some great programs to offer, she said. "I just wish more people would use them. Once people give us a try, they have nothing but good things to say."

Filling Higgins' shoes will not be easy, but Jenniffer Efaw is up to the task. Efaw, a familiar face to MMDHD clients, has been orienting with Higgins and will be assuming nurse practitioner duties for the department. Efaw has the commitment, passion and education needed for the job. She has been a nurse for 18 years, 15 of which have been spent as a Public Health Nurse with MMDHD, primarily in immunization, WIC, family planning, and communicable disease. Efaw earned her LPN in 1992; RN in 1993; BSN from Ferris State University in 2005; and her Master's in Nursing, following the Family Nurse Practitioner track, from MSU in May. She earned her formal nurse practitioner certification in August.

"I love people," says Efaw. "I especially like being able to work with the residents of my 'home' community."

Efaw is excited to pick up where Higgins left off. "I wish Rusty well in her retirement and look forward to making a positive impact on the lives of the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties, just as she has."

Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.

###