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MMDHD Pandemic Influenza Summit well-attended

ITHACA/STANTON/ST.JOHNS~ The threat of an Influenza Pandemic involving Gratiot and Montcalm Counties is very real, and Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) is striving to ensure that residents and community leaders are prepared.

MMDHD hosted a second Pandemic Influenza Summit, which was held at the Masonic Palthways in Alma on October 23. Featured keynote speaker Dr. Arnold Monto, MD, a world renowned pandemic influenza expert and speaker, shared the history of pandemic, the seriousness of the issue and what lies ahead.

“The summit was well attended by community partners,” said Kimberly Singh, MMDHD Health Officer. “Our goal was to educate and motivate community leaders and partners to develop plans for their own agencies and/or constituents in order to prepare for pandemic influenza. The entire community needs to be working together in a coordinated fashion in order to prepare ourselves and our community for what could be a devastating event.”

Also on the day’s agenda was a state panel discussion highlighting what various state departments are doing to prepare for a pandemic as well as how departments are working together across agencies. Hearing information about what state departments are doing assists local partners by providing guidance and sharing additional resources for planning. Panelists included Bob Higgins, Michigan Department of Education; Anthony Katarisky, Michigan State Police; Eden Wells, Michigan Department of Community Health; and Eileen Phifer, Michigan Department of Transportation.

Afternoon breakout sessions also addressed the following topics: Emergency Management Services/Health Care, School preparedness, Home and Family Preparedness and Business Continuity planning.

“A pandemic has the potential to cause mass devastation to the health of the community, our local resources and the economy,” said Dr. Robert Graham, Medical Director of the Mid-Michigan District Health Department. “Being prepared is one of the single best prevention strategies we have at our disposal to address these challenges.”

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