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One Vision, One Voice: Health Access for All

For Immediate Release

A Gift with Year-Round Meaning

ESCANABA – When it comes to meaningful holiday giving, not every gift comes colorfully packaged under the tree. Some of the most heartfelt ones offer year-round hope to needy uninsured Upper Peninsula friends and neighbors who have been unable to afford the most basic health care services, medical testing and prescription medications.

A holiday donation in support of five community-based Access to Health Care Coalitions' programs in the Upper Peninsula can yield peace of mind and essential health benefits for those without insurance coverage and can lead to personal outcomes like these from 2006-2007:

- *"I am not going without and my job has greatly improved, am not going to work sick,"* reports a Marquette County resident.
- *"It has given me the opportunity to quit smoking,"* notes a U.P. patient. *"Without the generosity of the program, the physical exam, tests, etc., would not have happened because of soaring medical costs. Thanks!"*
- *"Since I lost my health insurance, it was always a big worry wondering how I was going to pay for medications,"* says a Houghton County resident. *"With this program that burden has been lifted."*
- *"I have taken a new interest in my health care because this program has taken out the fear of the cost that without medical insurance I could never afford,"* writes a Schoolcraft County resident.
- *"I definitely would not be able to afford the medications I'm on nor the office visits therefore would go without treatment. Thank you very much,"* acknowledges one patient from Gogebic County.

Economic hard times and unexpected expenses can make the holidays less than bright for anyone facing health issues; the plight of the uninsured struggling financially and going without health



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care is a year-round concern, both nationally and locally, according to Stacie Kucera, executive director of the Upper Peninsula Health Access Coalition.

“Access Coalitions in the U.P. are doing something to help,” she said. “They coordinated health care opportunities for more than 2,500 qualifying uninsured residents of all 15 U.P. counties during both 2006 and 2007.”

Access Coalitions serve a working-age population between 19 and 64 whose household incomes fall at or below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level and have no insurance benefits through state or federal low-income programs. Many are employed full- or part-time or are self-employed but can't make ends meet in their monthly budget to pursue needed health care.

With the generosity of hundreds of volunteer health care providers, prescription medication sources and community contributors in 2007, many in the U.P. will be able to enjoy a healthier holiday season and a higher quality of life in 2008.

Access Coalitions are charitable non-profit 501 c3 organizations; donations to their ongoing programs are tax deductible to the full extent of the law – that means a holiday gift will give the donor a tax deduction come April's tax season. Access Coalitions include:

- **Community Health Access Coalition** (Chippewa, Luce and Mackinac counties);
- **Dickinson-Iron Medical Care Access Coalition;**
- **Medical Access Coalition** (Delta and Menominee countie)s;
- **Medical Care Access Coalition** (Marquette, Schoolcraft and Alger counties) and
- **Western Upper Peninsula Healthcare Access Coalition** (Baraga, Houghton, Keweenaw, Gogebic and Ontonagon counties).

Visit www.uphealthaccess.org for more about Access Coalition programs and services across the Upper Peninsula, then make your holiday donation to your local coalition or to the U.P.-wide Access program at http://www.uphealthaccess.org/how_help_donate.html through the Upper Peninsula Health Access Coalition.

It will be a gift that can make a difference in the health of fellow Upper Peninsula residents in 2008!