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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
AND ENVIRONMENT

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March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

Colon cancer is unique in the medical world. It is one cancer that can actually be prevented if detected early before cancerous polyps have a chance to grow and spread. Colon cancer can strike at any age, but 9 out of 10 new cases are in people age 50 or older.

That is why colorectal cancer screening is recommended for men and women over the age of 50 and for anyone with a family history of the disease, regardless of age.

In Kansas, 1,733 individuals were diagnosed with colorectal cancer in 2005 and 1,604 died from the disease. Nationally more than 145,000 new cases of colon cancer were diagnosed in 2005 and 56,290 Americans died. Colorectal cancer is the second leading cancer killer among both men and women, second only to lung cancer.

There is good news – the American Cancer Society reports a nationwide drop in colon cancer deaths in 2003-2004 due to an increase in screening and early detection. The National Colorectal Cancer Research Alliance, co-founded by national news anchorwoman Katie Couric, has promoted colonoscopy tests since 2000 and part of the rise in awareness can be attributed to those efforts. The ads “Are you the picture of health?” featuring Couric are being used extensively during March 2008 to raise awareness of colon cancer.

The Kansas Cancer Partnership (KCP), in conjunction with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, is using the Couric print ads, as well as TV and radio spots featuring other celebrities such as Morgan Freeman, Diane Keaton and Jimmy Smits in an extensive media campaign throughout the month of March. The KCP also is partnering with 12 Cancer Centers across the state that are conducting local community information and screening activities.

The Cancer Centers participating in this year’s colorectal cancer activities include:

- The University of Kansas Cancer Center, Kansas City;
- Susan B. Allen Memorial Hospital, El Dorado;
- St. Francis Comprehensive Cancer Center, Topeka;
- Mercy Regional Health Center, Manhattan;
- Hays Medical Center, Hays;
- Coffeyville Regional Medical Center, Coffeyville;
- Via Christi Regional Medical Center, Wichita;
- Tammy Walker Cancer Center, Salina;

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- South Wind Oncology Associates and St. Catherine Hospital, Garden City;
- Lawrence Memorial Hospital, Lawrence;
- Four Tribe's Women's Wellness in Horton; and
- Heartland Cancer Center, Great Bend.

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As the state's environmental protection and public health agency, KDHE promotes responsible choices to protect the health and environment for all Kansans.

Through education, direct services and the assessment of data and trends, coupled with policy development and enforcement, KDHE will improve health and quality of life. We prevent illness, injuries and foster a safe and sustainable environment for the people of Kansas.