

## **Event Celebrates National Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day and Grand Opening of new Clinic at AIHFS**

*Wednesday, May 9<sup>th</sup> is National Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day. The American Indian Health and Family Services Clinic is celebrating with a fun event for Native American and Alaskan Native children, their families, and friends. The day is also an opportunity to celebrate and display their exciting new clinic renovations. Strong, supportive connections that show children they are valued members of their community are important to their mental health.*

Detroit, MI April 30, 2012 — What do food, an open-mic and a bouncy house have to do with mental health? Lots if you are a child! “We express our emotions in many ways. Our job as Behavioral Healthcare Providers is to help children and their families learn to communicate their emotions in healthy, balanced ways. This event highlights how emotional expression can be fun as well as meaningful,” said Tina Louise, Director of Healthcare and Recovery for AIHFS. Ashley Tuomi, Executive Director for AIHFS, added, “Events that draw us together in celebration, especially celebration of children and their voices add to feelings of worth, love and support for a child. Those are tools they have to build great character and rebound from traumas.” On Tuesday May 9<sup>th</sup>, from 4:30 pm to 7:30pm, AIHFS will host a celebration that includes art displays and performances, traditional native games and songs, food, face painting, crafts, and education on children’s mental health. The event will be held at AIHFS, 4880 Lawndale Street, Detroit.

The event will also feature the grand opening of their remodeled medical and behavioral healthcare clinic, including two new exam rooms and three remodeled behavioral healthcare suites. The planning process included consulting community members in order to embrace a culturally appropriate design. Ayesha Ghazi, Director of Clinic Business Operations & Quality Assurance, says “The renovations to the clinic are complete and look fantastic. The staff members are now organized in a circle, which highlights the traditional way that native people work together, and we are happy to have two brand new exam rooms – the space, now six exam rooms and a pod area, are also going to include the seven grandfather teachings of the Anishinabe people in painted murals. These new improvements will contribute greatly to the integration of culture and mental health services integration in our clinic.”

The celebration will also include a CD fundraiser, “We Are Dream Seekers,” performed by Joe Reilly and The Dream Seekers. The songs are playful, clever, engaging, and always have something meaningful to say. The core message is an invitation to heal our relationships with ourselves, each other, and the earth. CD sales benefit the Dream Seekers Native American Youth Group and Prevention Program at AIHFS, which is aimed at raising self-esteem and developing problem solving and social skills for young American Indians.

Nickole Fox, the Health Education Director at AIHFS, added “Mental health is how we think, feel and act when facing life’s situations. It’s important that we begin to educate children at an early age, so they understand the impact and importance of mental health. Children experience a wide range of feelings every day, and we hope that they will feel the love of their community, the value of their voices, and have fun!”

AIHFS is a non-profit urban Indian health center serving the American Indian community of Southeastern Michigan. They offer comprehensive, culturally-integrated health care by providing medical and behavioral health services and health education services, suicide prevention and education, and outpatient substance abuse treatment and prevention programs. These services are open to persons with or without insurance. They also have an active youth program, provide health and wellness programs, and sponsor community events. The celebration will be held at the AIHFS clinic, 4880 Lawndale Street, Detroit. It is sponsored by the Garrett Lee Smith grant, the Sacred Bundle Project.

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