

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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State Health Department Launches Statewide Challenge to Control High Blood Pressure

*Challenge Kicks off **Million Hearts™ VA** to Reduce Heart Attacks and Strokes*

(Richmond, Va.)— State Health Commissioner Karen Remley, MD, MBA, FAAP, pledged Virginia's support of the national Million Hearts™ initiative this past March, making the state the third in the nation to join the project. The initiative focuses, coordinates, and enhances cardiovascular disease prevention activities across public and private sectors in an unprecedented effort to prevent 1 million heart attacks and strokes over five years.

“The Virginia Department of Health is committed to supporting this initiative and I am pleased to announce the launch of **Million Hearts™ VA**, a statewide approach to preventing heart attacks and strokes in the Commonwealth,” said Dr. Remley. “To launch this integrated effort, I challenge health districts as well as citizens, organizations, hospitals, providers and pharmacists to take 1 million blood pressures during the month of May as a way to highlight the importance of controlling hypertension in the Commonwealth.”

During the month of May, in coordination with American Stroke Month and National High Blood Pressure Education Month, the Commissioner's Million Hearts™ Blood Pressure Challenge not only asks partners to take or provide blood pressures but also to educate citizens to have their blood pressure checked at least once every year. “It is important that people with hypertension take steps to control it with lifestyle behavior changes and medication management, and monitor their blood pressure by checking it regularly,” said Cynthia Warriner, RPh, past president of the Virginia Pharmacists Association.

Beginning May 1, 2012, individuals can make their blood pressure screenings count towards Virginia's goal by reporting their screenings through the www.MillionHeartsVA.org website. Health care providers, pharmacies and other organizations can also add the number of blood pressures they've taken to the state's total. Individuals and organizations can register and report blood pressure screenings by clicking on the Commissioner's Million Hearts™ Blood Pressure Challenge. The focus of this challenge is on blood pressure control rather than screening alone so reporting may include blood pressures taken for screening, diagnostic and general monitoring purposes.

“The rate of high blood pressure in Virginia has been steadily increasing, with 25.7 percent of adults reported as having high blood pressure in 2009,” said Dr. Remley. “Everyone in the Commonwealth plays a part in reducing high blood pressure by embracing the mission of Million Hearts™, participating in the Million Hearts™ Blood Pressure Challenge in May and supporting upcoming efforts to reduce heart attacks and strokes throughout the state over the next five years.”

For more information about the Commissioner's Million HeartsTM Blood Pressure Challenge or Million HeartsTM VA, visit www.MillionHeartsVA.org or contact Lindsey.Parker@vdh.virginia.gov.

For more information about the national Million HeartsTM initiative, visit <http://millionhearts.hhs.gov>.

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