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ALANA'S FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES INAUGURAL ALANA YAKSICH NATIONAL COLLEGE & UNIVERSITY FLU VACCINATION CHALLENGE WINNERS

Bloomfield Hills, Mich. - The flu vaccine is the number one way to prevent the flu, yet national estimates show that only 46.8% of people 6 months and older received their flu vaccination last flu season and only 43.3 for adults 18 and over. Both are well below the Healthy People 2020 targets of 70% vaccination coverage for person 6 months - 17 years and over 18 years old.

To address these low rates, since the 2014-2015 flu season, Alana's Foundation (AF), a small Michigan-based non-profit, has partnered with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) for the very successful Michigan College & University Flu Vaccination Challenge as a friendly competition between schools to encourage increased flu vaccination rates on college campuses.

This flu season (2017-2018), Alana's Foundation launched a new national campaign inviting colleges and universities across the US to take part in the *Alana Yaksich National College & University Flu Vaccination Challenge*. The response was fantastic!

With 31 schools participating representing 11 states, it is with great honor that Alana's Foundation announces the inaugural winners of the *Alana Yaksich National College & University Flu Vaccination Challenge*: University of Rochester - Rochester, NY; Wayne State University - Detroit, MI; and the University of Wisconsin - Madison, WI; for the small, medium, and large-sized schools, respectively.

"We started Alana's Foundation in 2009 after my daughter, Alana, age 5, died from the flu, a vaccine preventable disease", said Zachary Yaksich, founder and Director of AF. "I am amazed how the colleges/universities at the participating institutions have embraced this challenge and really made a difference in the yearly efforts to increase vaccination rates among the vulnerable student population and their community."

The *Alana Yaksich National College & University Flu Vaccination Challenge* ended last week in conjunction with [National Influenza Vaccination Week](#) when the Center for Disease and Prevention (CDC) encourages everyone six months of age and older to get their flu vaccine before the holiday season. In the last three decades, 75 percent of flu seasons peaked between December and February. By getting the flu vaccine now, families will protect themselves and their loved ones against the flu during the holidays and through the duration of the flu season.

"Every flu season is different and unpredictable. I urge everyone not to underestimate the impact the virus can have on our health," adds Mr. Yaksich. "There is still plenty of time to benefit from vaccination coverage and to help keep your family healthy before flu activity increases or a tragedy hits close to home."

According to the CDC, flu is a contagious respiratory disease caused by influenza viruses that can cause mild to severe illness. Flu activity is on the increase nationally. Since it takes about two weeks after the flu vaccine is administered for the body to build an immunity to the flu, it is important to get vaccinated as soon as possible. There are multiple flu shot options this season, so people should speak with their healthcare provider about which vaccine is best for them.

Flu vaccines are available at many locations including provider offices, pharmacies, and local health departments. To find a location near you, visit <http://flushot.healthmap.org>. To stay up-to-date on flu activity in the US, visit www.cdc.gov/flu.

Alana's Flu Foundation is a 501(c)3 organization founded in memory of Alana Yaksich who died of influenza in 2003. The mission of Alana's Flu Foundation is to educate the public about the importance of yearly influenza vaccinations and in doing so, increase vaccination rates by providing convenient and affordable flu vaccination options as well as provide support for families that have lost a child. Recognition includes the 2012 Michigan Honoree for the Center for Disease Control Childhood Immunization Champion Award, the 2012 Alliance for Immunization in Michigan Outstanding Achievement Award, the 2015 National Adult and Influenza Immunization Summit - Immunization Excellence Honorable Mention for the MICHIGAN College/University Flu Vaccination Challenge and the 2016 AIM Bulls-Eye Award. For more information visit www.alanasfoundation.org