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Health Department Receives National Award ***One of 25 Nationwide to Receive “Model Practice Award” in 2008***

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) honored Sarasota County Health Department today, Thursday, Sept. 11, for implementing a program that demonstrates exemplary and replicable qualities in response to a local public health need. Sarasota Healthcare Access is one of 25 local public health programs selected from across the nation to receive NACCHO’s Model Practice Award.

Sarasota Healthcare Access was created two years ago through a collaboration with Sarasota County Health Department, the Community Health Improvement Partnership (CHIP), local hospitals, Senior Friendship Center and other “safety net” providers. The Sarasota Healthcare Access program helps residents with limited incomes who lack health insurance to have better access to primary care and specialty care, dental services and affordable medications. The goal is to reduce unnecessary use of hospital inpatient and emergency rooms for non-urgent services.

“We are pleased to receive NACCHO’s Model Practice Award. The award recognizes our commitment to develop responsive and innovative public health programs to improve healthcare access for low income and uninsured residents in our community,” said Bill Little, MBA, MPH, health director of the Sarasota County Health Department (SCHD).

A committee of peers selected the SCHD’s Sarasota Healthcare Access Program from a group of 118 local health department applications. The Model Practice Awards program honors initiatives – including programs, resources, and tools – that demonstrate how local health departments and their community partners can effectively collaborate to address local public health concerns. Sarasota Healthcare Access will become part of an online, searchable database of successful public health practices in areas ranging from immunizations and maternal and child health to infectious diseases and emergency preparedness. The database will allow NACCHO to share information about what is working across the county in local public health.

SCHD and Sarasota Healthcare Access joins a special group of health departments that exemplify the forward thinking, proactive attitude of our nation’s public health system. NACCHO congratulates SCHD on this important recognition.

For more information, visit www.sarasotahealth.org or call 941-861-2900. For more information about the NACCHO Model Practice Awards, visit the web site www.naccho.org.