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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**PHARMACISTS IMMUNIZE FIRST 1,000 AT BETTER BEGINNINGS CHILD CARE FACILITIES**

**LITTLE ROCK, AR (Nov. 8, 2012)** – Members of the Arkansas Pharmacists Association (APA) have provided 1,000 free immunizations to child care employees at 38 Better Beginnings child care facilities in 19 Arkansas cities since mid-October. Fifteen pharmacies have provided the immunizations statewide and many more are expected to participate in the program. Pharmacists hope to give 5,000 shots, including 2,500 each of seasonal influenza, plus tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (Tdap,) by the end of 2012.

According to a report by the National Immunization Survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released Nov. 5, Arkansas had the largest increase in overall flu vaccine coverage of any state in the U.S. from 2010 to 2011. Arkansas's ranking improved from 27th to 10th in the U.S. for the year; the state's flu immunization rates were 46.6 percent of Arkansas's population over six months of age, up from 44.2 percent the year before.

Employees at Arkansas Better Beginnings child care facilities are eligible for the vaccines. They were identified in conjunction with the Adult Immunization Project of the Arkansas Center for Health Improvement (ACHI). To date, pharmacies primarily in central and northwest Arkansas have provided the immunizations.

Infants are more susceptible to complications and death from pertussis, or whooping cough, and are not fully protected with vaccines until they are 12 months old. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends everyone who may come into contact with an infant be vaccinated against whooping cough. As of August 2012, more than 21,000 cases of whooping cough have been reported nationwide; if this trend continues, 2012 will be the largest outbreak in more than 50 years. A study conducted from 1999 to 2004 found that for every 1 million babies born, between 4 and 13 die before 2 months of age from the whooping cough. Children under the age of are more susceptible to this disease, so the most reliable way to protect them is to vaccinate their caregivers.

(more)

Seasonal influenza is a highly contagious virus that is spread when people are in close contact with one another. It is important to protect adults and the children that they care for. The virus can cause a mild to severe illness, and can even lead to death. The CDC provides more information on the best protection for pertussis and seasonal influenza on its website: [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/).

*The Arkansas Pharmacists Association, founded in 1882, is the statewide professional association representing approximately 2,200 pharmacists in Arkansas. APA strives to further the professional advancement of pharmacists, advocate the value of pharmacy, and safeguard the health and well-being of every Arkansan. Its mission is to advance a professional and business environment for Arkansas pharmacists to be successful and fulfilled in serving patients.*

**PHOTOS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST**

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