

Community Service & Corporate Responsibility Award 2012 Honoree

Ingham Health Plan (IHP)

The Ingham Health Plan (IHP) was created in 1998 by the Ingham County Board of Commissioners to meet the needs of a growing uninsured population in Ingham County. Over the past two decades, IHP has served more than 70,000 Ingham County residents, earning a national reputation for sound fiscal stewardship and as a model community-sponsored program for those without medical coverage. Today, the plan is a no-frills alternative to traditional health insurance for approximately 12,000 Ingham County adults. IHP is not insurance, but it helps eligible residents receive medically necessary services at little to no cost. IHP's affordability offers tremendous value—routine office visits and generic prescriptions are covered with \$5 copays. IHP members include people who have part- or full-time jobs but are not provided insurance coverage by their employer, can't afford to purchase it themselves, and are not eligible for publicly funded healthcare. Thanks to IHP, mammograms and screenings for women have more than doubled over the past five years. IHP's impact goes beyond helping the uninsured.

Until 2012, the Ingham Health Plan had never sought a millage for financial support throughout its 14-year history. On Tuesday, Nov. 6, Ingham County voters overwhelmingly approved a ballot proposal by voting "yes" on the Ingham County Health Services millage. The three-year, 0.52 mill levy for the IHP garnered an estimated 60 percent voter approval. The millage will raise about \$3.3 million each year, allowing the Ingham Health Plan to offer basic health services to Ingham County residents whose individual incomes are between \$17,500 and \$28,000, who are not eligible for Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act, but can't afford to pay for health insurance.

To increase awareness about the ballot proposal, the IHP team formed a coalition that included Ingham County healthcare providers, businesses, policymakers, nonprofits, neighborhood councils, elected officials, advocacy groups, senior citizens, churches, and others. The successful outcome of the 2012 Ingham County Health Services millage would not have been possible without the strong leadership and vision of IHP Executive Director Robin Reynolds and the IHP Board of Directors. They devised strategies that effectively overcame numerous potential pitfalls: a sluggish local economy, persistently high unemployment, opposition to a property tax increase, a record number of statewide ballot initiatives that Michigan voters roundly rejected, and widespread misperceptions about the impact of the Affordable Care Act. IHP's limited campaign budget could not afford paid advertising through TV, radio, or the *Lansing State Journal*. Instead, IHP devoted its scarce resources to earning editorial endorsements and positive media coverage from the *Lansing State Journal* and *City Pulse*, multiple interviews on local news/talk radio shows, and distributing 1,000 yard signs during the final two weeks of the campaign. The Capital Area Health Alliance endorsed and supported this campaign.

Thanks to the generosity of Ingham County voters, IHP will put these funds to work on behalf of the community's uninsured low-wage earners. The IHP Board, management, and staff skillfully put together the talent and resources to win a county-wide ballot campaign that marks the beginning of an exciting new chapter in Ingham County's strong history of increasing access to high quality healthcare for its citizens.