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Create a Safer, Happier Halloween

Eau Claire, WI, October 21, 2016 – Halloween can be a scary time for the millions of families across the country managing food allergies. Food allergies are a potentially life-threatening disease and a growing public health issue. One in 13 children in the U.S. has a food allergy – that’s about two children in every classroom. For these children, even a tiny amount of their allergen has the potential to cause a severe reaction. Chances are, a child in your neighborhood has a food allergy.

Halloween is tricky for those managing food allergies because many popular candies include the most common allergens. Even candy that does not include an allergen may not be safe if it is made on the same equipment with allergens. Many “mini” or “fun-size” versions of candy items contain different ingredients than their full-size versions. In addition, many small candy items may not have labels so it is very hard for parents to figure out if these items are safe for their child with food allergies.

The Teal Pumpkin Project, an annual campaign from Food Allergy Research & Education (FARE), aims to raise awareness of food allergies and keep all trick-or-treaters safe and healthy. A teal pumpkin placed on a doorstep is a sign to children with food allergies that there are non-food treats or “treasures” handed out.

The Eau Claire City-County Health Department encourages community members to keep all children safe while trick-or-treating by supporting the Teal Pumpkin Project with these simple steps:

- 1) Pick up low-cost toys or treasures for trick-or-treaters. Non-food treat ideas include bubbles, glow sticks, stickers, stencils, or bouncy balls. Check the party section of any store for bags of low-cost party favors. Keep your food treats and non-food treats in separate bowls.
- 2) Place a teal pumpkin – the color of food allergy awareness – in front of your home or business. No time to paint a pumpkin? Place a free printable sign from FARE (www.foodallergy.org/teal-pumpkin) outside to tell visitors you have non-food treats available.

“By offering non-food treats, you are not only keeping children with food allergies safe, you are also helping to keep all children in your neighborhood healthier by providing another option to candy,” states Susan Krahn, Public Health Nutritionist with the Eau Claire City-County Health Department and mother of a child with food allergies.

For more information about the Teal Pumpkin Project visit www.tealpumpkinproject.org. For more information about food allergies, visit www.foodallergy.org.

