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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Elizabethtown, N.Y Essex County Health Department Launches Free Snowshoe Lending Program for residents this winter.

Essex County Health Department has partnered with local libraries by offering free snowshoe sign-outs for community members to enjoy on local trails and then return to the library when finished. This initiative correlates with our monthly social media fitness campaign named #getfitessexcounty that was introduced this past October.

“We know how long North Country winters are and the challenges that are faced by many to remain physically active during that time. This program will promote an outdoor activity for individuals, families and seniors of all abilities while providing a fun option to recreate comfortably,” said ECHD Director of Public Health Linda Beers. “Helping Essex County families and community members lead healthier lives is deeply embedded in the ECHD mission.”

As part of the Essex County Community Health Assessment/Community Health Improvement process, ECHD worked with the University of Vermont Health Network-Elizabethtown Community Hospital and Adirondack Health-Adirondack Medical Center to identify priority areas for resource prioritization. Under the Prevent Chronic Diseases Area, ECHD and the partners noted above selected a corresponding goal to reduce obesity and the risk for chronic disease. This community investment aligns with helping to improve community health by increasing access to opportunities to be physically active in one’s community. The program has the added benefit of utilizing an existing community resource, building upon the “Library of Things” concept where libraries serve as community hubs for programming delivered to enable people to engage in lifelong learning and development.

Participating libraries were identified by ECHD through analysis of community health data which showed a higher-than-average need for access to physical opportunities for its residents and the proximity those communities have to local trails. Each library has received 6-9 pairs of snowshoes ranging in size from toddler to adult. Individuals are encouraged to contact the libraries to check out the snowshoes. Committed libraries include:

- **Keeseville Free Library**
- **Au Sable Forks Free Library**
- **Paine Memorial Library - Willsboro**
- **Black Watch Memorial Library - Ticonderoga**

The Essex County Health Department extends a note of thanks to Excellus BlueCross BlueShield for providing Community Health Award funding to support this program that increases access to opportunities for physical activity. “Excellus BlueCross BlueShield is committed to making Upstate New York a better place to live, work and raise a family. As a nonprofit health plan, our mission is to help people in our communities live healthier and more secure lives,” stated Excellus BCBS Regional President Eve Van de Wal.

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Pictured above: Greggor McEwen gives snowshoeing a try