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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MAY 1 IS WORLD NO ASTHMA DAY

Washtenaw County Tobacco Reduction Coalition Celebration Part of May Asthma Awareness Month

YPSILANTI, Mich., April 27, 2007—The statistics are alarming. Asthma is the most serious chronic disease among children in the United States, with exposure to secondhand smoke a primary trigger for asthma attacks as well as emergency room visits. Six million children currently suffer from asthma, which accounts for one-third of all pediatric emergency room visits and is the leading cause of school absenteeism. In Michigan, 213,600 children and 654,100 adults currently have asthma and 17% of students in middle school and high school now report having asthma. Asthma causes an average of 15,545 hospitalizations each year in Michigan, of which children—from infancy to 4 years—have the highest hospitalization rate. Approximately 165 individuals die from asthma in Michigan each year.

The Washtenaw County Tobacco Reduction Coalition understands the importance of smoke free environments and is involved with many programs and activities designed to reduce tobacco use in Washtenaw County. In an effort to increase awareness about secondhand smoke and asthma, the Washtenaw County Tobacco Reduction Coalition is joining the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to participate in World No Asthma Day on May 1st and Asthma Awareness Month during the month of May.

Washtenaw County implemented the Washtenaw County Clean Indoor Air Regulation in February 2003. The regulation prohibits smoking in public and private worksites and public places. Smoke free environments provide all residents the opportunity to breathe cleaner air and improve everyone's health. For an asthmatic, the likelihood of experiencing an asthma attack decreases dramatically.

“When children are exposed to triggers such as secondhand smoke, it can lead to an asthma attack and the emergency room, which emphasizes even more the importance of parents providing smoke free homes,” said Deborah Borden, Tobacco Reduction Coordinator for the Washtenaw County Public Health Department.

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“While all populations are affected by asthma, children are affected disproportionately so. That’s why parents must be particularly careful about the quality of the air their children are exposed to.”

To increase awareness and understanding of asthma and its triggers, the Washtenaw County Tobacco Reduction Coalition and Tobacco Free Michigan are releasing five 30-second public service announcements that will be played on local radio stations. The ads remind the public that everyone is affected by the health risk of smoking and secondhand smoke.

For additional information on Asthma Awareness Month, the EPA Asthma Program, how indoor and outdoor pollutants can trigger asthma, and the ways to prevent children’s asthma episodes, log on to www.epa.gov/asthma or visit www.GetAsthmaHelp.org.

To view the public service announcements and to find out how to make your workplace or apartment smoke free, go to Tobaccofreemichigan.org or MISmokefreeApartment.org.

For more information about the Washtenaw County Tobacco Reduction Coalition, contact DeBorah Borden at (734) 544-6874 or via email at bordend@ewashtenaw.org.

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