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MAY 31 IS WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY

Yearly Event Highlights the Importance of Becoming Smoke-Free

YPSILANTI, Mich., May 30, 2007—Washtenaw County Health Department officials today announced their support for World No Tobacco Day, a World Health Organization (WHO) event that will be celebrated worldwide on Thursday, May 31. The yearly event is designed to inform the public about the dangers of using tobacco, the business practices of tobacco companies, and what people around the world can do to claim their right to a healthy living environment, free of tobacco products and second-hand smoke.

WHO reports that tobacco is currently the second major cause of death worldwide and that half of those who smoke regularly today—about 650 million—will eventually be killed by tobacco. World No Tobacco Day events highlight the significant health risk associated with tobacco use as well as the need for continual educational efforts to inform the public of the dangers of tobacco use.

“With 5 million deaths attributed to it every year, tobacco remains the leading cause of preventable death globally,” said Dr. Stan Reedy, Medical Director at the Washtenaw County Public Health Department. “In addition to the tremendous toll tobacco takes in human lives, we must also recognize the heavy social and economic costs society incurs by tolerating this very addictive and dangerous habit.”

While numerous scientific studies have concluded that smoking has a detrimental health effect on humans, mounting scientific evidence now indicates that secondhand smoke causes serious diseases such as lung cancer and heart disease, as well as respiratory illnesses like bronchitis and asthma. According to a report compiled by U.S. Surgeon General Richard Carmona, nonsmokers exposed to secondhand smoke at home or work increase their risk of developing heart disease by 25-to-30 percent and lung cancer by 20-to-30 percent. The study concluded that there is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke and that the only way to completely protect nonsmokers is to eliminate smoking indoors.

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As of May 15, 18 counties and 3 cities in Michigan have adopted “smoke-free worksites and public places” regulations. These regulations, however, still exempt restaurants and bars—locations where patrons and workers are still subjected to the dangers of secondhand smoke. Michigan is one of only 23 states that have not yet passed comprehensive state policies or regulations that protect all workers and the public from exposure to smoking.

Washtenaw County became the second county in Michigan to establish a smoke-free indoor air policy in 2003 when it implemented the Clean Indoor Air Regulation. This regulation prohibits smoking in public and private worksites and public places, creating a cleaner, healthier environment for county residents. According to the Washtenaw County Health Improvement Plan (HIP) 2005, 17% of county residents currently smoke, which is lower than the state average of 21%.

Ellen Clement, Health Officer at the Washtenaw County Public Health Department, said that she is very pleased with the commitment county residents made to creating smoke-free environments. “Since implementation of the regulation, the majority of people seem to support the concept of ‘clean air,’” she said. “There has been little opposition to the regulation since its implementation in 2003 and we hope that other counties will follow Washtenaw’s example and pass similar clean air acts.”

Improve Your Health: Quit Smoking!

You can greatly improve your health by quitting smoking. It is the only way to significantly reduce the risk of developing a tobacco-related disease. No matter how long you have been smoking, it is never late to improve your health.

Resources available to assist you in quitting smoking:

- The Michigan Tobacco Quit Line at 1-800-480-QUIT. Call to obtain a “Quit Kit” and a “Want to Quit” brochure, which lists websites and local smoking cessation resources.
- The Washtenaw County Tobacco Reduction Coalition, which works to reduce tobacco use among county residents through a variety of activities and events. Visit their website at http://www.ewashtenaw.org/government/departments/public_health/trc.html for more information about tobacco-related issues in Washtenaw County, including:
 - Adults and Tobacco
 - Youth and Tobacco
 - African Americans and Tobacco
 - Smoke-free Businesses
 - Smoke-free Apartments
 - Washtenaw County Health Improvement Plan
- “Never Quit Quitting,” an informational presentation for health care providers who are interested in educating pregnant women about the health benefits of becoming smoke free.

For more information about these and other tobacco cessation resources, or to learn more about the Washtenaw County Tobacco Reduction Coalition, contact DeBorah Borden at (734) 544-6874.

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