



Media Release

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“Real People, Real Success” Successful Tobacco Control Efforts in the Greater Capital Region

ALBANY, NY---The Partners of the New York State Tobacco Control Program, along with the American Cancer Society and the American Heart Association, will present the real life successes of tobacco control efforts in the Greater Capital Region at a Legislative Breakfast on Tuesday, March 6th at the Empire State Plaza.

The panel of presenters and success stories includes Vicky Masta, Vice President of Risk Management Services at Albany Medical Center (AMC). Vicky helped lead AMC and 18 other hospitals to implement a tobacco free campus on January 1st, 2007. “This is the first time in our country that a group of hospitals this large pursued this common goal without a mandate. We did it because it was the right thing to do, for our patients, staff and the community” states Vicky.

Mindy Scialdone, is a real estate agent who smoked a pack a day for over 25 years. She joined the Seton Health’s The Butt Stops Here Program to accompany a friend who wanted her support with quitting. “I didn’t join with the intention to quit but I found myself becoming engaged in the program and I haven’t smoked in 4 years. Now, I tell people when you want to quit, call me because I know of a program that can really help you.”

Mark Doody, Superintendent of the Hudson Falls Central Schools believes that the work that he did with the Bureau of Tobacco Use Prevention and Control School Policy Specialist has really transformed the culture at the Hudson Falls Schools. “We now have a strong tobacco control policy in our schools that is helping to prevent tobacco use and to help those who smoke to quit.”

Thanks to the extensive airing of television commercials by the partners of the Bureau of Tobacco Use Prevention and Control, there has been a direct increase in the numbers of calls to the NYS Smokers Quitline. The truth@ campaign, which has recently aired on many stations in the capital region, was developed and field-tested by American Legacy Foundation, one of the country’s leading organizations working towards creating tobacco-free generations. “We could not have used better ads targeting teens to encourage them not to smoke and, ultimately, saving a

generation from the harmful effects of tobacco,” said Erin Sinisgalli, the Capital District Tobacco-Free Coalition’s Media Committee Chairperson.

At the Legislative Breakfast, the Capital District Tobacco-Free Coalition honored the many local organizations that have rejected tobacco industry money and have made a commitment to not taking tobacco industry support in the future. Local bars and restaurants have signed policies saying they will not accept support from the tobacco industry or in any way promote their products. “There are bars and restaurants in our community that have taken a stand and have said no thanks to big tobacco. When private businesses make this kind of commitment they are standing up for a healthier community” said Judy Rightmyer, Director of the Capital District Tobacco-Free Coalition.

The College of St. Rose recently passed a smoke free campus policy that limits tobacco use to a few designated areas on their campus and the SUNY Board of Trustees has banned smoking in all SUNY campus dorms effective July 1, 2007. This past summer, all Marriott hotels adopted a smoke free hotel policy. The Albany Marriott has taken this a step further and has signed a policy that they will not allow the tobacco industry to advertise or promote their products in their hotel.

Local municipalities have also passed resolutions and policies that will protect their citizens and keep the tobacco industry out of their communities. The Town of East Greenbush is honored for signing a resolution that they will not allow any tobacco industry promotion at their community events. Schenectady County has passed a similar resolution stating they will not allow the tobacco industry to sponsor any of their family events. Susan Savage, Chair of the Schenectady County Legislature tells us, “The tobacco industry just does not have a place at our family events promoting their products to our youth.”

“There is still much more work to be done”, states Sherry Tomasky, Regional Advocacy Director of the American Cancer Society. “We need to stop the sale of flavored cigarettes which the tobacco industries markets to our youth and young adults. We need to ban smoking in all college dorms, collect all the excise taxes on each pack of cigarettes and ban smoking at all existing and new casinos. These changes will continue to de-normalize the use of tobacco and make our communities healthier, better places to live and work.”

Paul Hartman, Directory of Advocacy for the American Heart Association states “Today's honorees should be proud of their great accomplishments in the fight to reduce tobacco use in the greater Capital District. But we cannot become complacent - we must continue to educate the public and our elected officials on the devastating personal and health toll of tobacco, and the insidious practices of the tobacco industry.”

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