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## NYS Tobacco Control Program Saves Lives; Saves Dollars

*New Yorkers Still Want and Need Our Help*

Albany, NY – The New York State (NYS) Tobacco Control Program (TCP) has been proven to reduce youth smoking and help current smokers to quit. That is the message hundreds of tobacco control leaders from every county in NYS will carry to Albany on February 12, 2014. These representatives will provide information to state lawmakers about state-funded tobacco control programs that help reduce the burden caused by tobacco, thus saving lives and state tax dollars.

New York State legislators are invited to visit the Well in the Legislative Office Building where tobacco control representatives will be joined by volunteer youth leaders to answer questions, offer resources and give demonstrations about effective tobacco prevention programs being delivered to communities from Buffalo to Binghamton to the Bronx.

“Tobacco control leaders live and work in the communities they serve. They coordinate with community members, allied health partners and neighborhood organizations to provide community-level programs that reach disadvantaged urban neighborhoods and underserved rural areas,” said Deborah Mendzef, Program Coordinator of the Cayuga County Tobacco Free Partnership. “The working poor and minorities are among the hardest hit by tobacco use. Tobacco control programs help vulnerable groups who need it most.”

The most recent U.S. Surgeon General’s Report calls for comprehensive statewide tobacco control programs to be funded at levels recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). CDC recommends funding for New York State to be \$203 million. NYS TCP is currently funded at \$39.3 million.

“Tragically, tobacco use still remains the leading cause of preventable death in NYS. While tobacco is a source of substantial revenue to New York State, unfortunately it is source of even greater costs, including billions in health care costs. The real human costs of smoking are seen in lives damaged or cut short as a result of nicotine addiction. For every New Yorker who dies because of smoking, there are another 20 who suffer from serious tobacco-related illnesses,” said Julianne Hart, NYS Government Relations Director, American Heart Association.

While progress has been made, there is much more work to be done. There are 2.4 million adult smokers in New York and 330,000 of them are young adults. While youth smoking rates have declined, approximately 100,000 high school age youth are currently smoking. NYS Tobacco Control Programs work. The NYS Smokers’ Quitline helps adult smokers to quit. Reality Check programs are youth-led community-based organizations that de-glamorize tobacco use and prevent youth smoking initiation.

Dana Isabella, Program Coordinator for Reality Check of Clinton, Franklin and Essex Counties added, “Reality Check youth across New York State work to engage their local communities in supporting policies that restrict the tobacco industry’s access to the next generation of new smokers – kids. Almost 90% of adult smokers report starting to smoke before they were 18 years of age. Who better to stand up and protect kids from the predatory practices of the tobacco industry than youth? Reality Check youth have seen enough and want to see change happen in their community.”

The U.S. Surgeon General reports that for every adult who dies prematurely from a smoking-related cause, more than two young adults become replacement smokers.

“New York State received a much-deserved ‘F’ in the Lung Association’s recent State of Tobacco Control Report for failing to adequately fund programs proven to prevent and reduce tobacco use,” said Michael Seilback, Vice President of Public Policy and Communications at the American Lung Association of the Northeast. “Investing in tobacco control is one of the best things state leaders could do to improve the health of all New Yorkers and reduce tobacco-caused disease among those living in poor urban and rural communities.”

In New York State, more than 23,600 lives are lost due to tobacco use annually. Tobacco costs New Yorkers an estimated \$10.3 billion on annual health care expenditures. New York State has cut tobacco control funding in half since 2007.

Michael Burgess, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network continued, “According to the Surgeon General’s most recent report, tobacco use is even more closely tied to cancer. One in three cancer deaths is caused by smoking and smoking is now linked to colorectal cancer and liver cancer. Now more than ever it is critical that the state maintain funding for the tobacco control program so that New Yorkers can access the tools they need to quit.”

The New York State Tobacco Control Program (NYTCP) implements evidence-based and promising strategies to prevent and reduce tobacco use. The NYTCP envisions a tobacco-free society for all New Yorkers. To learn more, visit the NYS Tobacco Control website at [www.TobaccoFreeNYS.org](http://www.TobaccoFreeNYS.org)

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Editor's note: Individuals from the Tobacco Control Program are available to provide expert comment regarding all aspects of the program. To request an interview, contact Erin Sinisgalli, Manager Smoking Cessation at (518) 330-4412 or [Erin.sinisgalli@sphp.com](mailto:Erin.sinisgalli@sphp.com).