



First Warning Sign of Cancer.

Spit Tobacco: Not a Safe Alternative

Kansas Tobacco Quitline 1-866-KAN-STOP



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 7, 2007

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KANSAS SPIT TOBACCO SUMMIT TO BE HELD IN AUGUST

TOPEKA, Kan.- Tobacco control advocates, oral health professionals and teens will be attending the Kansas Spit Tobacco Summit, “Smokeless Does Not Mean Harmless,” in Hutchinson on August 29 at the Kansas Cosmosphere. The Tobacco Free Kansas Coalition (TFKC), the Kansas Department of Health and Environment Tobacco Use Prevention Program, and TASK, the statewide youth movement against tobacco, are hosting this free summit.

“As more communities and states enact smoking bans, tobacco companies are aggressively marketing spit tobacco products as an alternative to cigarettes,” TFKC Executive Director Mary Jayne Hellebust said. “We are working hard to inform Kansans of the dangers of spit tobacco which may be even more addictive because some spit tobacco contains more nicotine than cigarettes.”

Another reason to increase spit tobacco prevention efforts is that Kansans have a higher than average use of spit tobacco. The 2005 Kansas Youth Risk Behavior Survey shows 17.4 percent of Kansas high school males reporting current use of smokeless tobacco compared to the estimated national prevalence of 13.6 percent.

Gruen Von Behrens, an opening speaker at the summit, will discuss how as an Illinois teen his life was dramatically changed by spit tobacco use. At 17 he had his lower jaw removed because of oral cancer caused by spit tobacco. Now in his 20’s and after 30 disfiguring surgeries, he is working to prevent others from experiencing his fate.

The Kansas Spit Tobacco Summit is an education opportunity for tobacco prevention advocates, oral health professionals who treat the harmful effects spit tobacco has on patients, and the more than 20 Kansas youth groups who received “Smokeless Does Not Mean Harmless” grants. The Kansas Dental Board will grant 4.25 Continuing Education Credits (CEUs) for oral health professionals attending the summit.

Anyone interesting in reducing spit tobacco use in Kansas is encouraged to register for this free summit at the Tobacco Free Kansas Coalition Web site www.tobaccofreekansas.org. The registration deadline is August 15.

Project funding is provided by the Sunflower Foundation: Health Care for Kansans, a Topeka-based philanthropic organization with the mission to serve as a catalyst for improving the health of Kansans.

About TASK

Initially formed in 1998 as an offshoot of the Tobacco Free Kansas Coalition, TASK has evolved into an independent entity involved with the prevention of Kansas teen tobacco use. Local TASK groups work to inform teens of big tobacco manipulation and reduce teen tobacco use in Kansas. For more information on TASK visit www.kstask.org.

About Tobacco Free Kansas Coalition

The Tobacco Free Kansas Coalition (TFKC) is a statewide alliance of health, education, parent, youth, law enforcement and other civic organizations and individuals. TFKC advocates for laws, policies and funding of effective programs that will result in significant reductions in tobacco use and addiction, especially among children and high-risk groups. For more information on TFKC please visit www.tobaccofreekansas.org.

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