

NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release

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January marks the 50th anniversary of the first Surgeon General's report on smoking

This month, our nation marks the 50th anniversary of the first Surgeon General's report on smoking and health, alerting Americans to the deadly consequences of smoking. The report was a turning point in the fight against tobacco. In 1964 smoke hung in the air in restaurants, offices and airplane cabins. More than 42% of U.S. adults smoked, and there was a good chance your doctor was among them.

Since then, our country has made amazing progress. We've cut smoking rates by more than half (from 42.4 percent in 1965 to 18 percent today), and passed strong smoke-free laws for workplaces and outdoor spaces. These laws protect much of the country from harmful secondhand smoke and have saved millions of lives.

Our work is not finished. Tobacco use is still the number one cause of preventable death in the United States. Smoking kills more than 440,000 Americans each year, sickens millions more and costs the nation \$193 billion annually in health care expenditures and lost productivity. About 44 million adults still smoke, and more than 3,000 kids try their first cigarette each day. The tobacco industry still spends \$1 million an hour to market its deadly products, often in ways that appeal to kids.

Nebraska currently spends \$2.4 million a year on tobacco prevention and cessation programs, which is 11.1 percent of the \$21.5 million recommended by the Centers for Disease Control. The tobacco companies spend \$58.8 million a year to market their products in Nebraska alone. This is 25 times what the state spends on tobacco prevention.

Over the past 50 years, proven strategies have been developed that can reduce smoking rates, protect all Americans from secondhand smoke and ultimately eliminate the death and disease caused by tobacco. These strategies include tobacco tax increases, comprehensive smoke-free workplace laws, hard-hitting mass media campaigns, health insurance coverage to ensure smokers have access to quit-smoking treatments, and well-funded, sustained programs to prevent kids from smoking and help smokers quit.

Tobacco Free in the Panhandle a part of the Panhandle Prevention Coalitions implements these proven strategies to address the selected priority areas: of preventing youth initiation and eliminating second hand smoke exposure. Strategies include conducting tobacco compliance checks in partnership with the Nebraska State Patrol and Scottsbluff Police Department, working to increase smoke-free multiunit housing options, promote smoke/tobacco-free policies to businesses, schools and outside venues.

Our nation's progress against tobacco is a remarkable public health success story. But we cannot claim victory until every child is tobacco-free and we have eliminated the death and disease caused

by tobacco. To join the local fight for tobacco prevention join the Panhandle Prevention Coalition and adopt a tobacco-free policy for your home or business. For assistance contact Tabi Prochazka at tprochazka@pphd.org or call 308-487-3600 ext 107.

For more information visit www.pphd.org/tfn.html or call PPHD at 308-487-3600 or toll free at 866-701-7173. Funding for Tobacco Free in the Panhandle is provided by the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services/Tobacco Free Nebraska Program as a result of the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement. Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety and quality of life for all who live, learn, work and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle Community.