



Contact: Janine Logan, Director of Communications
631-963-4156 or Cell: 631-334-8321
Marise Montrose, Public Relations Assistant

Health Community Re-affirms Commitment to a Tobacco-free Long Island

Region's hospitals pledge voluntary move to be totally tobacco-free campuses

(Hauppauge, NY ... November 18, 2010) Nassau and Suffolk County health commissioners joined Long Island's hospitals and smoking cessation advocacy groups yesterday (11/17/10) at Hofstra University (Hempstead, NY) to re-affirm their commitment to eliminate tobacco use across Long Island and to stand firm on their stance that the sale of cigarettes be banned in pharmacies. The press briefing and informational event jump started the groups' support of the American Cancer Society's Great American Smoke Out, which occurs today.

Kevin Dahill, president/CEO of the Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council, the association that represents all Long Island hospitals, announced that by mid-2011 all Long Island hospitals will be tobacco-free campuses, meaning no tobacco products of any kind will be allowed on hospital property. This is a voluntary commitment that goes beyond requirements of current local and state laws. The Long Island hospital region is one of only a few in the state to adopt this policy.

"Quitting tobacco is one of the best things you can do for yourself and your family," said Dr. Maria Torroella Carney, Nassau County Health Commissioner. "... I urge all smokers to quit and young people not to start."

Dr. Eli Avila, Chief Deputy Commissioner of the Suffolk County Department of Health Services added, "Strict enforcement of state and local tobacco control laws, and school and community education programs have dramatically reduced tobacco use in Suffolk. Suffolk residents are indeed fortunate to be living in a county dedicated to improving their health through the reduction of tobacco use and exposure to environmental tobacco smoke."

According to Tobacco Action Coalition (TAC) Advocacy Director Sue Kennedy, the smoking rate among college-aged youths has increased, while there has been a decline among smoking rates with teenagers. Strict laws prohibiting the sale of tobacco products to minors have contributed to this trend. TAC is embarking on a campaign to eliminate the sale of tobacco products in pharmacies. "Young adults are the new at-risk population," said Kennedy.

For information about how to quit and programs and services available, contact your local hospital, county health department, or the New York State Quit Line www.nysmokefree.com.

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From left: Kevin Dahill, President/CEO of the Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council, Dr. Eli Avila, Chief Deputy Commissioner Suffolk County Department of Health, Dr. Maria Carney, Health Commission of Nassau County, and Leah Jefferson, Regional Advocacy Director, American Cancer Society.

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