



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Looking for a breath of fresh air?
The Town of Niskayuna is the place to be.**

(Troy, NY) March 18, 2009 - The Town of Niskayuna is setting a new standard for what it means to be a Healthy Community. Already an active leader in making Niskayuna a more walkable community, the past year has been a hallmark year for the town's efforts to establish Niskayuna as an environment free from the harmful effects of tobacco use and promotion. On March 25th they will be honored with the first annual Community Tobacco-Free Champion Award for their leadership in promoting tobacco-free living. The Recognition Dinner, sponsored by the Capital District Tobacco-Free Coalition, will be held at the Albany Marriott from 6-8 p.m.

Niskayuna's comprehensive approach to promoting tobacco-free living began with the passage of the Capital Region's most expansive smoke-free parks law in June 2008. "Our smoke-free parks law encourages a healthy lifestyle for our residents, especially our children," says Joe Landry, Niskayuna Town Supervisor. "Our parks are designed for healthy activities such as walking, running, bicycling, or participating in sporting events, and they should be tobacco-free. As legislators we need to set the right example for our children today so that we can prevent a new generation of smokers tomorrow."

But the Niskayuna Town Board didn't stop there. To further protect young people from the harmful effects of tobacco advertising and promotion, they passed two Resolutions; one encouraging town tobacco retailers to reduce or eliminate tobacco advertising in their stores and the other endorsing the elimination of smoking in movies rated G, PG and PG-13.

"Children and teens are especially vulnerable to tobacco advertising and promotion. There are now numerous studies showing that tobacco advertising and promotion increase tobacco use among adolescents," maintains Judy Rightmyer, Coalition Director. "In addition, exposure to smoking in movies may account for as many as half of all new adolescent smokers in the U.S. The Town of Niskayuna recognizes that

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some changes can't be legislated, but they've been willing to take a stand and encourage changes in the community that will promote health."

"Tobacco Control Program's Community Partners are making great progress in protecting our youth from the tobacco epidemic." reports Dr Jeff Willett, Director of the Tobacco Control Program, New York State Department of Health. "Since 1997, the rate of smoking among New York high school students has dramatically decreased 58%. While the national smoking rate among high school students is leveling off, smoking among New York State high school students has continued to robustly decline to 13.8 % compared to the 20% national figure. Tragically even at these reduced levels of initiation, 389,000 youth now under 18 and alive in New York will ultimately die prematurely from smoking. It is imperative that New York State continues to aggressively work to de-normalize tobacco use."

The Capital District Tobacco-Free Coalition, Reality Check Youth Action, the Tobacco-Free Healthy Schools Program and, Center for Smoking Cessation at Seton Health are all grant funded programs from the NYS Bureau of Tobacco Use Prevention and Control. The Capital District Tobacco-Free Coalition is a non-profit partnership of people and organizations from Albany, Rensselaer and Schenectady counties working to decrease the social acceptability of tobacco use, eliminate exposure to secondhand smoke, promote cessation and prevent the initiation of tobacco use among youth and young adults. For more information on the Coalition and their programs, go to www.SmokeFreeCapital.org.

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