



Capital District Tobacco-Free Coalition
24 Aviation Road, Suite 204
Albany, NY 12205

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Monday, June 27, 2011

Contact: Theresa Zubretsky
(518) 459-2550
(518) 961-6140 (Cell)
tzubretsky@setonhealth.org

Keep Butts Away From Where We Play!

*Two Capital Region communities launch tobacco-free parks policies
to protect children, animals, and the environment*

ALBANY, N.Y. – Today marks the local launch of the Community Partnerships for a Tobacco-Free New York campaign to educate New Yorkers about the benefits of tobacco-free outdoor recreational areas. The campaign launch coincides with the implementation of tobacco-free parks policies in the Town of East Greenbush and the Town of Bethlehem, two communities united by their commitment to prevent exposure from secondhand smoke, reduce toxic tobacco litter in parks, and send a positive message to young people that tobacco use doesn't belong in family-friendly environments designed for active play.

Tobacco litter is poisonous to children and wildlife. Discarded cigarette butts are the most common form of litter. Studies show they are toxic, slow to decompose, and costly to remove. Cigarette butts have been found in the stomachs of birds and marine animals and can cause digestive blockages. Children routinely pick up these toxic butts and try to place them in their mouths.

“We passed a tobacco-free parks resolution in the Town of East Greenbush and signs just went up to help ensure that this summer play season is a healthy one for our town's children,” said Supervisor Rick McCabe. “It's a policy that's good for kids, good for the environment and good for the health of the entire East Greenbush community.”

Supervisor Sam Messina actively supported adoption of the Town of Bethlehem resolution. “There is no question that eliminating tobacco use from our Town of Bethlehem parks will create a safer and healthier park and play environment for our youth. Our Town Board is proud to have made this happen.”

Public support for tobacco-free outdoor spaces is growing. Nearly 83% of Capital District residents support tobacco-free playgrounds, including 3 out of every 4 current smokers; and more than half of residents support making all parks and beaches tobacco-free. Fourteen municipalities in Albany, Rensselaer and Schenectady counties have adopted tobacco-free parks policies. The Capital District Tobacco-Free Coalition provides sample policies, free signage and assistance in creating outdoor tobacco use policies.

“The U.S. Surgeon General has made clear that there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke,” said Theresa Zubretsky of the Capital District Tobacco-Free Coalition. “Secondhand smoke poses particularly

serious health risks for children, whose bodies and lungs are still developing. By expanding their smoke-free outdoor areas, the Town of East

Greenbush and Town of Bethlehem are reducing exposure and preventing tobacco-caused disease. It's an important part of what this education campaign is all about."

The Capital District Tobacco-Free Coalition is one of the Community Partnerships for a Tobacco Free New York funded by the NY Tobacco Control Program. They educate community leaders and the public about the dangers and social costs of tobacco use, engage local stakeholders to adopt policies that restrict the tobacco industry's presence, de-normalize tobacco use, and reduce exposure to secondhand smoke.

For more information, visit SmokeFreeCapital.org.



One of two billboards that will be placed in Albany, Rensselaer & Schenectady Counties