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Missouri Branded with a Big “F” for Tobacco Prevention and Control

HCC launches outreach campaign to gauge reaction to proposed cigarette tax

(March 23, 2012) Lexington, MO – Missouri earned a failing grade for tobacco cessation and prevention programs spending \$58,693 in 2011 to prevent tobacco use statewide. An “F” was also handed down for smoke-free air, a 17 cent tax on a pack of cigarettes—the lowest in the nation—and for smoking cessation efforts. Missouri spends 53 cents per smoker on smoking cessation, even though the Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends spending at least \$10.53 per smoker.

“When you consider the fact that 10,000 adults die every year because of cigarettes, the relevancy of smoking cessation and prevention efforts gets very clear,” said Toniann Richard, executive director of the Health Care Collaborative (HCC) of Rural Missouri. “Our goal is to expand awareness about smoking cessation, policy issues around tobacco use, and enable those we serve to voice their opinions and concerns.”

Legislators in Jefferson City have been doing just that, proposing ballot initiatives to increase the tax on a pack of cigarettes. If enough signatures are collected by May, those initiatives could land on the November 2012 ballot.

The Healthy Missouri Initiative Petition proposes to increase the cigarette tax to 73 cents per pack on “economy” brands. Add the current 17 cents per pack and the state tariff increases to 90 cents per pack. Estimates predict the tax would generate between \$283 million - \$423 million in additional revenue per year. Some of the funds generated would provide tobacco education and cessation programs.

HCC is surveying area consumers to gauge attitudes about the cigarette tax, smoking cessation programs and smoke free environments. The Lexington-based, 501(c)(3) non-profit is in its second year of funding from the Social Innovation for Missouri (SIM) grant that focuses on tobacco prevention and control efforts in Lafayette County. **The survey can be found out www.hccnetwork.org/smoke-out or by texting Smoke Out to 72727.**

For more information, or to learn about smoking cessation programs, contact Toniann Richard at 660.259.2440. You can also follow HCC on Facebook and Twitter.

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About HCC

The Health Care Collaborative of Rural Missouri partners with area agencies, businesses and other non-profits to advocate for the health and well being of Lafayette County residents. Among HCC’s current programs are:

- Health information technology initiatives to equip health care providers with the resources needed to offer telemedicine and telehealth services that increase patient access to quality health care;
- Social Innovation for Missouri (SIM) that addresses tobacco cessation and obesity prevention; among other programs; and
- Rural Missouri Health Co-op—with a workplace wellness component—aimed at creating a healthier workforce and reducing insurance premiums.

