

Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit

Media Release

July 11, 2011

Health Unit Encourages Tobacco-Free Sports & Recreation

The Champlain Cardiovascular Disease Prevention Network has released its 2011 Atlas of Cardiovascular Health, and with it comes a reminder that the case for tobacco control cannot be restated often enough.

It is well known that unhealthy lifestyle habits begin at a young age in the home and at school. In a survey of participants from Eastern Ontario's Champlain Region who smoked, the overwhelming majority (85.5%) began smoking between the ages of 11 and 20 years of age (Champlain Community Heart Health Data [CCHHS], 2011). In Leeds, Grenville & Lanark, 37.5% of the general population started smoking between the ages of 5 and 14 years – above both the provincial and national average of 33.7% and 36.9% (Canadian Community Health Survey, 2007-08).

Achieving widespread success in youth tobacco control requires a change in the environmental conditions around us. Offering opportunities for physical activity and play free from second-hand smoke exposure is a prime example of a favourable condition for which our community must strive.

Tobacco-free sports and recreation discourages youth from smoking, protects people from secondhand smoke exposure, supports those who are trying to quit, and promotes tobacco-free living while giving people a chance to perform at their best. With summer now officially upon us, it's a great time for coaches, parents and organizations to encourage healthy behaviours by discouraging the use of tobacco products and reducing exposure to secondhand smoke.

"With adults acting as role models for our children and teens, any action that prevents exposure or clearly supports non-use of tobacco products is a step in the right direction," says Paula Stewart, Medical Officer of Health for the Health Unit, "with 27.6% of the LG&L population self identifying as daily smokers (RRFSS, 2010), our youth are exposed to tobacco on a regular basis. A recreation area free from tobacco products and exposure to secondhand smoke would ensure everyone enjoys the full health benefits of physical activity and play."

For more information on making your sports organization or municipal fields smoke-free or for support with implementation of a smoke-free outdoor policy, please contact sfoa@healthunit.org.

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Contact:

David Patterson, BSc, Youth Engagement Advisor, 613-345-5685
or Yves Decoste, RN, BScN, Tobacco Co-ordinator, 613-345-5685