

**CONTACT:**

Dr. Sharon Harris

516-676-2008

safeglencove@yahoo.com

**Press Release**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Facts About Tobacco from the Tobacco Action Coalition of LI**

The Community Committee of the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition serves as a think tank to examine community needs assessment data, implement alcohol and substance abuse awareness campaigns, educate the public regarding ongoing and emerging alcohol and substance abuse trends and pursue viable funding streams to address gaps in community services.

For nearly a decade, the Coalition has successfully partnered with Carol Meschkow-Manager of the Tobacco Action Coalition of LI on environmental strategies with; the City, local businesses and community groups, school district and youth organizations in Glen Cove to advance a tobacco free community, and to prevent our local youth from becoming the next generation of smokers.

According to a Community Survey of 1408 Glen Cove residents conducted by the Coalition in 2016, tobacco use was an area of concern preceded by marijuana, anxiety, alcohol and depression. Based on these concerns and teen initiation it is important to share a few salient points about the health benefits of Tobacco 21 in protecting our local youth by raising the minimum purchase age from 19 to 21 years old.

- Tobacco use is the number one cause of preventable death in the US, killing more than 450 thousand individuals each year. In fact, the Surgeon General concluded there is no safe level of second-hand smoke.
- First and foremost Smoking is harmful to nearly every organ of the body and young people who smoke are at risk for immediate health problems such as; increased blood pressure, asthma and reduced lung growth. Alarmingly, the Surgeon General also calls smoking a pediatric epidemic. Each day 3,200 youth in the US under the age of 18 become daily smokers. Almost 1/3 will die prematurely from smoking.
- Tragically our impressionable youth are often referred to by the tobacco lobby as “replacement smokers”. Approximately 96 percent of all smokers began before the age of 21.
- Adolescent brains are uniquely vulnerable to the effects of nicotine. The younger the age, the greater the risk of nicotine addiction. It’s a fact that the brain doesn’t fully

develop until the age of 25 affecting areas like critical decision making, controlling impulses and addiction.

- Tobacco companies place most of their advertising in stores where 75% of teens shop at least once per week, with stores located near schools containing nearly 3x the amount of tobacco advertisements. Raising the purchase age will keep the sale out of the reach of high school students and hopefully delay onset.

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC)

- E-cigarette use between 2011 and 2015 increased nearly 10 times for high schoolers.
- The use of electronic cigarettes is not without harm, and may encourage the use of conventional tobacco products. These devices are now the most commonly used nicotine products by high school and middle school students
- Currently, according to a study by the CDC, 2.3 million High Schoolers and 620 thousand Middle Schoolers are currently using electronic cigarettes.

Military leaders also recognize the toll tobacco takes on troop readiness and on the military healthcare system, and are actively taking steps to reduce tobacco use.

- The Department of Defense (DoD) estimates that 175,000 current Active Duty Service members will die from smoking unless they are able to quit.
- After Hawaii raised its tobacco sale age to 21, the military bases opted to comply with the higher age in recognition of its benefits to readiness, health.
- Alarming, many current military smokers - 36 to 40 percent - report initiating tobacco use *after* joining the military.

Given everything we know about what smoking does to the body and how it weakens our combat preparedness, it is unacceptable that soldiers smoke at higher rates than the general population and that more than 1 in 3 soldiers who are current smokers started smoking *after* joining the military. Rear Admiral John Fuller, Navy Region Hawaii and Naval Surface Group Middle Pacific stated, *“I’ve heard this argument by some shipmates against cracking down on tobacco: ‘If someone is young enough to die for their country, they should be free to be allowed to smoke.’ But, turning that argument on its head: ‘If someone is young enough to fight for their country, they should be free from addiction to a deadly drug.*

The benefits of Tobacco 21 have been addressed with policies in two states with a third on way. Additionally, approximately 170 municipalities in 13 states have also raised the tobacco purchase age to 21. Across NYS there are many jurisdictions with policies including locally in Suffolk and New York City. There are also various local jurisdictions including the Towns of Hempstead and North Hempstead and the Villages of Williston Park and Great Neck Plaza and others across the states with policy solutions.

If current trends continue, 5.6 million of today’s youth will die prematurely from a smoking related illness. That’s why TAC as a member of the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition has partnered with several community leaders including: the City, Library, Youth Bureau, Boys and Girls Club, Melillo Center, Housing Authority and the Senior Center on initiatives to protect Glen Cove residents from the dangers of second hand smoke, and most importantly to change the

social norms of tobacco as an acceptable norm to prevent our youth from becoming the next generation of “replacement smokers”.

For more information on Quitting and Cessation help please call the New York State Smokers Quitline at 1-866 NY-Quits or (1 866 697-8487). It is always a good time to Quit, and to offer help to those you care about.

For more information about SAFE and its other initiatives please contact the office at: 516-676-2008 or visit the website at <http://www.safeglencove.org> or our Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition>.

Respectfully Submitted by,  
Carol Meschkow- Manager  
Tobacco Action Coalition of LI  
[Carol.Meschkow@Lung.org](mailto:Carol.Meschkow@Lung.org)  
(631) 415-0942