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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**SAFE Glen Cove Coalition and the Tobacco Action Coalition of Long Island-
“Why Today is the Perfect Day to Quit Smoking”**

Take Down Tobacco Day (TDTD) is a national day of action every March that enables youth and adults alike to stand up and speak out against the tobacco industry and to encourage friends and family to Quit the habit. In an effort to prevent youth initiation and change the social norms regarding the acceptability of smokers SAFE, Inc. Executive Director-Dr. Sharon Harris and Coalition Partner, the Tobacco Action Coalition of LI (TAC) Community Engagement Manager-Carol Meschkow joined forces nearly 15 years ago to educate and empower local youth to voice their concerns about “Big Tobacco”.

They have been working closely with SAFE’s Coalition School and Youth Committee members including; the Glen Cove School District and Glen Cove Youth Bureau-After 3 Program. Over the years they have marked the day with age appropriate educational activities that are youth driven aimed at helping teens understand the dangers of Tobacco marketing in their communities’ retail establishments including pharmacies, and the health risk associated with smoking and vaping.

This year the entities planned to recognize the significance of the day at the After 3 Program-Life Skills Component through; educational messaging along with interactive fun activities. The aim of the program was for youth to educate their peers, loved ones and local leaders on the risks associated with tobacco, and offer pleas to smokers/vapers to mark the day (TDTD) as the first day of their Quit. Further, the four entities SAFE, TAC, the Youth Bureau-Executive Director-Spiro Tsirkas, and Life Skills Facilitator-Francesca Carbone, felt compelled with the average age of onset at 13 to drive the education down to the lower grades to help create awareness and hopefully prevent initiation.

Due to the unforeseen hazards of the Coronavirus Pandemic, and the closure of all non-essential business including schools and youth programs, plans have been postponed. Despite not being able to celebrate as planned, the youth and Coalition Partners want to stress that more than ever, now is the perfect time to Quit.

From the very first day of someone’s Quit attempt they start to reap health benefits to every major organ and system of the body, from one’s brain to their DNA. Quitting positively impacts major organs and systems that are essential to help your immune system fight off infection and disease such as; the lungs and circulatory system. Per the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the cilia in your lungs are one of the first parts of your body to heal. These hair-like projections wave back and forth like a brush sweeping as air moves in and out of your lungs. They help your body ward off colds and respiratory infection and help clear mucus. If this process is impeded the mucus can build up in ones lungs.

In an interview with CNN according to Dr. Brian Christman- Professor of Medicine at Vanderbilt University and volunteer spokesperson for the American Lung Association, “Covid-19 creates an added sense of urgency, and there's ample reason to believe that Quitting smoking during the pandemic could increase your odds of fighting off the virus”. Besides lung-related issues, smoking cessation can also deliver healthy benefits to the heart that could help stave off the possibility of cardiac arrest. Heart attacks are another cause of death in Covid-19 cases. “If you make the decision to quit a second short-term gain from quitting smoking comes from reducing ongoing inflammation in your body, which can predispose you to Covid-19”

The Campaign for Tobacco Free kids amongst other experts are beginning to speculate and purport that vaping can make one more susceptible to Coronavirus. The harmful impact of smoking on the lungs is already well documented. There is conclusive evidence that smoking increase the risk for respiratory infections, weakens the immune system and is a major cause of a number of chronic health conditions, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, heart disease and diabetes. Vaping is a relatively new product without the same years of study, but there seems to be a growing body

of evidence that vaping can also harm lung health. These factors put smokers, and in all likelihood vapers, at greater risk when confronted with the coronavirus.

The passage of the New York State Budget saw many Tobacco Control measures. Two areas in particular we have focused our youth education on include; prohibiting the sale of flavored e-cigarettes with the exception of those products that have already received pre-market authorization of the FDA and banning the sale of all tobacco products including vaping in pharmacies. The new bills do address mint and menthol; however, sadly many youth as evidenced in the surge in the rate of vaping have become addicted to nicotine. Many of those inadvertently became dependent as they did not understand the products contain nicotine and thought they were harmless. There is concern that the addiction will drive youth to tobacco flavored e-liquids, traditional tobacco and other emerging products. Statistics have shown that many youth are already co-dependent on combustibles simultaneously.

This past fall we saw the emergence of nicotine pouches on the shelves. These white pre-portioned pouches contain the addictive chemical nicotine, but not tobacco. They have been described as a tobacco-free version of Snus. No combustion is involved and they are used like chewing tobacco. To-date there is no independent testing of their ingredients. Nicotine pouches may entice youth as well as young adult never before smokers because they are available in an array of tempting fruit flavors and may be used unobtrusively.

In 2019, five Big Tobacco companies offered nicotine pouch products. Altria purchased 80% of the On! nicotine pouch company which sold in Sweden, Japan and the US. RJ Reynolds Velo is owned by R. J. Reynolds Vapor Company and it is sold in the US as well.

The efforts of the youth's voices along with all the other grassroots organizations and community leaders, gives the teens a reason to celebrate and feel the success of their efforts. However, because of this addiction and the availability of flavored tobacco products, there is still work to be done to educate local municipal leaders and stakeholders to effectively prevent the next generation of smokers.

SAFE, Inc. and their Coalition Partners remain committed during this unprecedented time to our collective mission to safeguard our local youth. SAFE, Inc. is the only alcohol and substance abuse prevention, intervention and education agency in the City of Glen Cove. Its Coalition is concerned about vaping and seeks to educate and update the community regarding its negative consequences. To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow us on www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition or visit the Vaping Facts and Myths Page of SAFE's website to learn more about how it's detrimental to your health www.safeglencove.org.

For Quit help contact the NYS Quit Line: at 1-866-NYS-Quits.