



STATE OF OKLAHOMA

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For more information contact:

Tracey Strader, Tobacco Settlement Trust Director, (405) 525-8738

Tobacco Settlement Endowment Awards Grants to Reduce Tobacco Use in Oklahoma

OKLAHOMA CITY – The Board of Directors of the Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust today announced the award of nearly \$1.8 million in grants to 16 local coalitions to implement the *Communities of Excellence* program to reduce tobacco use in Oklahoma.

“These grantees have successfully completed a rigorous community-based strategic planning process that will guide their activities over the next four years. The grants will allow local coalitions to implement comprehensive programs that are specifically tailored to significantly reduce tobacco use within their local communities,” said Susan Bizé, Chair of the Board of Directors.

Funded entirely with investment earnings from the tobacco settlement endowment, grants this year range in size from approximately \$100,000 to nearly \$200,000. Each grantee must provide matching funds equal to ten percent of their grant award. Combined, grant funds and matching funds will support the \$2 million program in 23 counties and three tribal nations this year.

State Treasurer Scott Meacham chairs the trust fund’s board of investors that oversees all investments. “I am glad the people of Oklahoma approved the constitutional amendment to permanently invest the tobacco settlement funds,” Meacham said. “The money earned on our investment of the settlement funds is being put to efficient use to help encourage tobacco users to quit and help prevent others from ever starting.”

Attorney General Drew Edmondson, one of the eight attorneys general responsible for negotiating the historic 1998 tobacco settlement between the states and big tobacco said, “The Communities of Excellence program may be one of the most important public health initiatives ever launched in Oklahoma. Communities across the state are taking a leadership role in the battle against tobacco addiction. These local coalitions know their communities and how to get things done.”

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“At the heart of each of these community grants is a coalition composed of organizations that are dedicated to improving the health of their communities,” said Tracey Strader, executive director. “These coalitions have demonstrated their potential for impact by working together to create plans based on proven programs and tailored to the unique needs of their community. We’re confident that they will work within their communities and with others throughout the state to effectively reduce tobacco use in Oklahoma.”

The *Communities of Excellence* program is consistent with the Board of Directors’ strategic plan that prioritizes funding for programs to reduce Oklahoma’s devastating tobacco use problem. The program is recommended by the Oklahoma Tobacco Use Prevention and Cessation Advisory Committee and State Plan.

The Tobacco Use Prevention Service of the Oklahoma State Department of Health provides technical assistance for the program, and the University of Oklahoma College Of Public Health, through the Comprehensive Cancer Center, evaluates the program.

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