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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Free Help Tailored for Moms-To-Be from the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline In Observance of Mother's Day Free Two-Week "Starter Kits" for Others Wanting to Quit Tobacco

OKLAHOMA CITY (May 9, 2008) – Even though they don't know it yet, 18 month old Johnathon and his little brother Xaviar due in July, have given their mom the best Mother's Day gift ever – the reason to quit smoking for good.

"I started smoking when I was 13 years old," said 22 year-old Ashley Adams of Shawnee. "It was peer pressure and growing up in a home where someone smoked. I tried to quit several times on my own, and did while I was pregnant with my first son, but then I relapsed."

Told of the dangers of secondhand smoke and smoking while pregnant by her health care professional, Ashley knew things had to change.

"Sometimes you just don't realize how smoking can harm others, especially your children, until your doctor lays it out for you. I did begin smoking again after Johnathon was born, but decided my home would be a smokefree area for the health of my family. With the support of my family and my concern for my second baby's health during my pregnancy, I decided I would quit for good."

The Pottawatomie County Health Department referred Ashley to the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline, a free tobacco cessation program that offers quit help tailored specifically to the needs of moms-to-be.

"I knew I wanted to quit and the Helpline coaching by phone worked perfectly because of my already busy schedule, my energetic toddler and being pregnant," said Adams. "The Helpline coach was very empathetic, listened to me and offered great advice on how to make it through the rough times while I was trying to quit. The coaching support for moms-to-be combined with my quit plan and my children's health has made my quit successful. I know that this time I have quit for good and that I will be a healthier Mom and a healthier role-model for my sons."

-MORE-

A Mother's Day Gift that Keeps Giving for a *Healthier* Lifetime ... ADD ONE

The Helpline is ready to help all Oklahomans who are ready to quit. By calling the Helpline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW, Oklahomans can receive free telephone based sessions with a professional quitting coach. The sessions focus on developing a quit plan tailored to participants' personal needs and on offering critical support in sticking with the plan. In observance of Mother's Day, Oklahoma residents who call the Helpline for coaching will also receive a free two-week "starter kit" of nicotine patches or gum mailed directly to their homes. This combination of cessation medications and coaching more than double the chances of a successful quit attempt. Free two-week "starter kits" will be offered for a limited time.

The Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline's hours of operation are 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. seven days a week, and staff will return any messages left after hours. Services are also available in Spanish by calling 1-800-793-1552. For more information on the Helpline, please visit: www.ok.gov/tset/Programs/Helpline.html. The Helpline is sponsored by the Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust, the Oklahoma State Department of Health and the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

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Sidebar: Mother's Day is a day to celebrate moms for who they are and all of the wonderful things they do. It is also a great time for moms to remember the important role they play in influencing the choices their kids make regarding tobacco use.

Quit Coaching Tailored to the Needs of Moms-To-Be

Quitting smoking is one of the most important steps a pregnant woman can take. The Quit Coaches at the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline have been specially trained to help Moms-To-Be quit while pregnant and help avoid the significant risk of relapse after a baby's arrival. By calling 1-800-QUIT-NOW, Moms-To-Be can receive the empathetic, support from quitting coaches which can make all the difference in quitting for good.

In Oklahoma

- More than 30% of Oklahoma mothers smoked during the three months prior to pregnancy.
- Approximately 18% of women in Oklahoma smoked during the last three months of their pregnancy.
- Mothers who smoked during pregnancy were twice as likely to have low birth weight infants as mother who did not smoke.
- 59% of women who quit during pregnancy began smoking again postpartum.

What Are The Health Risks From Secondhand Smoke?

According to the U.S. Surgeon General there is no safe level of exposure to second-hand smoke. Secondhand smoke contains more than 40 known or probable cancer-causing substances and may lead to the development of cancer during adulthood. Exposure to second hand smoke causes:

- a higher risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) in babies
- a range of other serious health and developmental problems including in older children increased rates of lower respiratory infections, ear infections, and asthma.

(Sidebar More)

A Mother's Day Gift that Keeps Giving for a *Healthier* Lifetime SIDEBAR... ADD TWO

- prolonged and worsened numerous medical conditions, including pneumonia, bronchitis, croup, laryngitis, bronchiolitis, asthma, flu, ear infections, colds, sinus infections, sore throats, and eye irritation
- increased school absenteeism, emergency room visits, and hospitalizations.

How Can Moms Keep Their Children From Smoking?

As a parent, you are one of the most important persons in a child's life, especially when it comes to cigarettes. You can make a big difference in the choices your kids make.

- If you smoke, quit. If you can't quit, keep trying. Children from families who smoke are twice as likely to become smokers themselves.
- Maintain a totally smoke-free home (even if you smoke).
- Educate your child about the dangers of cigarette smoking.
 - Talk about addiction and how hard it is to quit smoking.
 - Emphasize the immediate health effects.
 - Emphasize the effects of smoking on physical appearance.
- Listen to what your child says and does about smoking and encourage your child when he/she makes good choices.
- Ask your child about his/her friends and their attitudes toward smoking. Discuss peer pressure and how to deal with it effectively.
- Clear up any misunderstandings your child might have about smoking. For example: everybody is not doing it, getting hooked can happen very quickly, and quitting is very difficult.
- Make sure your kids' schools have strong and well-enforced no-smoking 24/7 policies for kids, staff and all events.
- Support federal, state, and local tobacco-prevention efforts.

How can you protect your child from secondhand smoke?

- If you smoke, quit smoking – or at least keep trying. Call the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW, talk to your doctor, or sign up for a stop-smoking course.
- Don't let anyone smoke in your home. Make sure anyone who smokes only does so outside, away from open doors and windows.
- Never smoke in the car, especially when your child is a passenger.
- Avoid leaving your child with someone who smokes or in smoky environments.
- Support strong federal, state, and local smoke-free laws.