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## TSET Board of Directors Continues Grant Funding for Prevention, Research, and Emerging Opportunities to Improve Health Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline Launches Free Online Cessation Service

OKLAHOMA CITY (September 9, 2011) – During its quarterly meeting, the board of directors of the Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust (TSET) was notified that certified earnings from the fund were \$18.9 million. Utilizing these funds, the board approved continued funding for prevention of tobacco use and obesity through community and statewide grants, and health communications campaigns. Research grants, which advance the prevention and treatment of cancer and other tobacco-related diseases, were also renewed. Additionally, three new grants were awarded under TSET's Unsolicited Proposals process, to the Oklahoma Child Care Association, Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy for the Oklahoma Afterschool Network, and Oklahoma State University Dining Services.

Investments of the fund are controlled by the board of investors, and spending of the earnings is managed by the board of directors. Both boards are appointed separately.

The board of directors also discussed a recent Attorney General's opinion. The opinion was requested by State Treasurer Ken Miller, chair of the TSET board of investors, to address an apparent conflict between language in the Constitution and language in state statute related to the definition of earnings from the fund. The board of investors certifies earnings for the board of directors to expend each year on programs to improve the health of Oklahomans. Attorney General Pruitt clarified that the Constitutional language requires the inclusion of realized capital gains when determining the earnings for certification. According to the opinion, "net" realized capital gains (profits and losses realized when stocks and bonds are sold) will now be included in the calculations of earnings. Previously, the board of investors certified earnings based on language in state statute, which included only interest and dividends.

According to Treasurer Miller, this change will require the board of investors to certify an additional \$17.3 million in earnings from FY 2011 investments. The current balance of the endowment trust fund is approximately \$660 million.

(MORE)

(ADD ONE)

Laura Beebe, PhD, PhD, Professor, College of Public Health, University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, reported positive key findings of evaluations of Oklahoma's Tobacco Stops With Me campaign. Key findings of the longitudinal study, which began in 2007, showed that exposure to the campaign among tobacco users doubled quit attempts, motivated non-tobacco users to help tobacco users quit, changed attitudes about tobacco and increased knowledge about the harms of secondhand smoke. Key findings in the 2011 cross-sectional survey showed 72 percent of Oklahomans reported recall of the campaign as well as an increase in knowledge of health effects of secondhand smoke.

"These are notable achievements for the three-year campaign," said Dr. Beebe. "These evaluation results may be viewed as precursors to behavior change and a possible bellwether of future tobacco cessation which can lead to better health in the state."

The board also discussed the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline program's addition of an online tobacco cessation counseling service, Web Coach®. The online service available at [www.QuitNow.net/Oklahoma](http://www.QuitNow.net/Oklahoma) provides counseling and support materials based on individuals' readiness to quit tobacco use. The program, which is free to Oklahoma residents, will help tobacco users create an easy-to-follow quitting plan that will help them prepare, take action and live without tobacco.

Web Coach provides online access to highly trained cessation Coaches by live chat and e-mail. Users will also gain membership to a private, online community where they can complete activities, watch videos, and join in discussions with others in the program. Interactive trackers on the website measure the money saved and progress made during the quitting process. Web Coach can be used alone or in addition to phone support.

Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline free services can also be accessed by phone at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669). Studies have found that using a tobacco Helpline can more than double a person's chances of successfully quitting tobacco. More than 175,000 Oklahomans have used the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline since 2003.

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#### **ABOUT THE OKLAHOMA TOBACCO SETTLEMENT ENDOWMENT TRUST**

The Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust (TSET) serves as a partner and bridge builder for organizations working towards shaping a healthier future for all Oklahomans. TSET provides leadership at the intersections of health by working with local coalitions and initiatives across the state, by cultivating innovative and life-changing research, and by working across public and private sectors to develop, support, implement and evaluate creative strategies to take advantage of emerging opportunities to improve the public's health. TSET – Better Lives Through Better Health.