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Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust program under way in Creek County

SAPULPA—The TSET Healthy Living grant program in Creek County is underway.

The Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust (TSET) Board of Directors recently awarded \$356,000 to Oklahoma State University (OSU), Department of Wellness for the first year of a new five-year TSET Healthy Living grant program that took effect July 1.

The five-year community grant program aims to prevent and reduce tobacco use and obesity by working with key public and private sectors within local communities. TSET awarded a Healthy Living grant to OSU Department of Wellness to work in partnership with businesses/cities and governments/schools/community institutions and organizations in Creek County.

“This is an exciting time because with the TSET Healthy Living grant, we can create opportunities in Creek County that make the healthy choice the easy choice where we live, work, learn and play,” said Lisa Prescott, Creek County Healthy Living coordinator. “We look forward to working with local business owners and managers, city officials, nonprofits, and school and community leaders to make that happen.”

The TSET Healthy Living program takes an integrated approach to addressing Oklahoma’s leading causes of death—cancer and cardiovascular disease—by preventing and reducing tobacco use and obesity.

In May, the TSET Board of Directors approved the award of \$14 million for 50 community-based Healthy Living grants that will cover 62 counties.

The Healthy Living program builds on lessons learned from more than a decade of TSET community-based grants. The new program was designed with the best research available, previous evaluation results, input from existing grantees, partner organizations, and nationally recognized experts.

“Over the past decade, we have seen measureable results from work of community grantees, as coalitions of passionate individuals and organizations have worked together to make a difference for today’s youth, and future generations of Oklahoma,” said TSET Executive Director Tracey Strader. “Thanks to these and other efforts at the local and state levels, youth smoking has been cut in half, adult smoking is at an all-time low and obesity in our state has leveled off.”

TSET is launching the Healthy Living community grant program as it celebrates the 15th anniversary of a voter-approved state question in 2000 that created the endowment trust. Funded by a portion of the tobacco industry’s payment to the state as part of the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement, the endowment trust is a long-term strategy to improve health. Only the earnings from the endowment are used to fund grants and programs.

Each year, the tobacco industry makes a settlement payment to Oklahoma and 45 other states as part of the national Master Settlement Agreement. Settlement payments will continue as long as cigarettes are sold nationally. Court documents obtained during state lawsuits against the industry showed that tobacco companies specifically marketed their product to youth under 18, in hopes of getting “replacement smokers.”

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