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Area Schools Choose To Begin 2011-2012 School Year 24/7 Tobacco-free

Tobacco kills more Oklahomans than alcohol, auto accidents, AIDS, suicides, murders and illegal drugs COMBINED. To combat the dangers of tobacco use and protect their students many schools have chosen to adopt a 24/7 Tobacco-Free School Policy.

In order to recognize the importance of adult role modeling for students during formative years and to provide a healthy environment for students, staff, patrons and visitors, the Spiro and Howe School Boards recently voted to adopt a 100 percent tobacco-free environment. These School District's Policies prohibits the use of all tobacco products on all district-owned property 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

"Current state law only mandates schools be tobacco-free between the hours of 7 am and 4 pm," states B.J. Barnes, Coordinator, Tobacco-free LeFlore County. "A goal of our coalition is to see all 17 LeFlore County school districts adopt a 24/7 Tobacco-free School Policy in an effort to give students the clear message that tobacco use is hazardous to their health."

Current LeFlore County Schools with 24/7 Tobacco-Free School Policies are Howe, Poteau, Shady Point, Spiro and Talihina.

Spiro School Superintendent Don Atkinson states, "With all the challenges that today's education brings to our children, we must do our part in providing a healthy environment along with promoting positive life skills. It has been a pleasure to work with Tobacco-Free LeFlore County in implementing the 24/7 Tobacco-Free Policy to protect our children."

Howe School Superintendent Scott Parks states, "I am very pleased by our schools commitment to this important cause. On behalf of Howe Schools, I believe that it is necessary that we support a 24/7 Tobacco-Free Campus to set a proper example for the students that we serve. I appreciate support of the coalition in allowing us to be a part of this initiative. I would also like to thank the coalition for supporting our community awareness efforts by supplying the necessary Banners and Signs allowing our school to effectively communicate our support of this initiative."

Tobacco-free LeFlore County is grantee of the Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust serving LeFlore County to prevent and reduce tobacco use. They do this by working with schools, municipalities, and business to instill policies and provide services to decrease the use of tobacco in our communities.

Tobacco-free LeFlore County is a program of the LeFlore County Coalition for Healthy Living and LeFlore County Youth Services, Inc.

For more information on or to join Tobacco-free LeFlore County in their efforts please contact B.J. Barnes, Coordinator, at (918) 647-4196 or bj@lcys.org.