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NEWS RELEASE

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Georgia Department of Public Health helps Georgians Quit Smoking for Life

ATLANTA – The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) launched a public service campaign today designed to raise awareness about the harmful effects of tobacco use and to motivate smokers to quit. In an effort to improve the health status of Georgia families, this public awareness campaign is being run in several regions where adult smoking rates and severe health effects are high.

“Research indicates that most smokers make several attempts before they can successfully quit,” said Dr. Kimberly Redding, Director of DPH’s Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Program. Quitting smoking is the most important step smokers can take to improve their health and protect the health of nonsmoking family members.

The toll of tobacco use continues to hurt Georgia’s children, families, communities, and economy. Lung cancer is the second most common cancer diagnosed in Georgia men and women combined.

In Georgia, one out of every six deaths or more than 10,300 adults dies each year due to tobacco-related diseases. In addition, approximately \$1.8 billion in healthcare costs among adults aged 18 years and older is attributed to tobacco use.

The campaign features a mix of advertising, including human interest stories and depictions of the health risks of tobacco use. Research has shown that such emotionally charged advertisements coupled with evidenced-based tobacco use cessation support give smokers compelling reasons to quit. As a result, each ad will be tagged with the toll-free Georgia Tobacco Cessation Quit Line at 1-877-270-STOP (7867).

According to the U.S. Surgeon General, smoking harms nearly every organ in the body. Research demonstrates that smoking and tobacco use cause cancers of the lung, mouth, stomach, pancreas, kidney, colon, cervix, and bladder, as well as heart attacks, strokes, pneumonia, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and many other severe health problems. In addition, exposure to secondhand smoke causes sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), acute respiratory infections, middle ear disease, exacerbated asthma, respiratory symptoms, and decreased lung function in children.

As noted in the 2010 Surgeon General's report, *How Tobacco Smoke Causes Disease: What It Means to You*, nearly 9 out of 10 men who smoke die from lung cancer in the United States. And for every person who dies from tobacco use, another 20 suffer with at least one serious tobacco-related illness. Despite the known dangers of tobacco use including lung cancer and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), one in five adults in the United States still smokes, and every day about 850 youth become daily smokers.

Radio and billboard ads will run throughout the campaign. These ads will feature the real-life story of Rick Stoddard, a man who lost his wife when she was just 46 years old to lung cancer caused by smoking. His story represents not only the lives lost each year from tobacco-related disease but also the network of family and friends who suffer when loved ones die premature, preventable deaths.

"I lost my wife, Marie, eleven years ago, to lung cancer caused by cigarette smoking," said Stoddard, a former smoker. "Since that time, I have dedicated my life to educating youth and empowering people to reject all tobacco products, through school programs, social media, and television public service announcements. I am motivated and driven to keep as many kids as possible from starting, and getting as many people as I can to quit by sharing our family story. Through these efforts, I hope to ensure that Marie's death was not in vain. I am honored that the CDC has chosen our story to profile in this new campaign, and I hope it results in lives saved."

The radio ads entitled *Just Hold On* and *Experience* from the Rick Stoddard series vividly depict some of the most common health consequences of tobacco use, such as lung cancer. The ads also remind the public about the devastating human loss associated with smoking or using tobacco products.

Georgians are also encouraged to seek quitting assistance by calling the toll-free and confidential Georgia Tobacco Quit Line (1-877-270-7867) and accessing the Live Healthy Georgia website at www.livehealthygeorgia.com for additional information. The Georgia Department of Public Health, Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Programs provide free Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) patches or gum to uninsured callers residing in counties within six Public Health Districts including:

- Northwest (Rome)-10 counties
- South (Valdosta)-10 counties
- Southeast (Waycross)-16 counties
- Coastal (Savannah/Brunswick)-8 counties
- North Central (Macon)-13 counties
- Southwest (Albany)-14 counties

Regardless of insurance status, the Georgia Tobacco Quit Line provides free and confidential, professional counseling tailored to tobacco users ages 13 and older including pregnant Georgia women. Georgia adults who use tobacco are encouraged to speak to their physician, pharmacist and nurse about safe and effective treatment options to help with quitting tobacco.

To find out which Public Health District your county is located in please visit <http://health.state.ga.us/regional/index.asp>.

For more information about adopting a tobacco-free lifestyle, Georgians are encouraged to log on to the “Be Smoke-Free” section on the Live Healthy Georgia website at <http://www.livehealthygeorgia.org/>

About the Georgia Department of Public Health

The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) is the lead agency responsible for the health of Georgia’s communities and the entire population. In 2011, the General Assembly restored DPH to its own state agency after more than 30 years consolidated under other departments. At the state level, DPH is divided into numerous divisions, sections, programs and offices, and at the local level, DPH functions via 18 health districts and 155 county health departments. Through the changes, the mission has remained constant – to protect the lives of all Georgians. Today, DPH’s main functions include: Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, Maternal and Child Health, Infectious Disease and Immunization, Environmental Health, Epidemiology, Emergency Preparedness and Response, Emergency Medical Services, Pharmacy, Nursing, Volunteer Health Care, the Office of Health Equity, Vital Records and the State Public Health Laboratory. For more information on DPH, visit www.health.state.ga.us.

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