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Contact: Leslie Gianelli
(203) 294-7213, Gianelli@chime.org

Smoke-Free Campus Initiative Clears the Air at Connecticut's Hospitals

Wallingford, CT – Marking the occasion of the American Cancer Society's Great American Smokeout, Connecticut's acute care hospitals have succeeded in "clearing the air" for patients, employees, and visitors through the successful adoption of smoke-free campuses across the state.

The smoke-free campus program began on the date of the Great American Smokeout in November 2008, when CHA was joined by sponsoring organization Pfizer, Attorney General Richard Blumenthal, the American Cancer Society, the American Lung Association, the American Heart Association, and the Connecticut Department of Public Health, in launching the voluntary initiative.



During the course of the two-year initiative, CHA member hospitals were provided tools to assist in implementing a smoke-free campus, participated in a forum where state and national experts offered information and advice, and had the opportunity to regularly share information and progress reports through meetings and communications facilitated by the Association.

More than 90 percent of Connecticut's hospital campuses are now completely smoke-free, with 100 percent participation expected by early 2011. As a result, hospital patients, employees, and visitors now enjoy a healthier environment at the state's hospitals.

Cigarette smoking is the major single cause of cancer in the United States and in Connecticut, as well as the most preventable cause of death. The American Cancer Society reports tobacco use is responsible for 1 in 5 deaths in the US. Based on data compiled by the Department of Public Health, 17 percent of adults in Connecticut use tobacco, costing the state \$1.7 billion annually.

According to Jennifer Jackson, CEO of the Connecticut Hospital Association, "the commitment of all hospitals in Connecticut to implement smoke-free campuses is consistent with our mission to promote community health, encourage smoking cessation, and offer the safest possible experience to patients and all who visit and work in our facilities."

In addition to eliminating smoking in areas surrounding hospitals, the initiative had ancillary benefits to the community. Some towns used the initiative as the basis for seeking to restrict smoking near public places such as schools and libraries. Smoking cessation programs offered by hospitals in connection with the initiative inspired many employees to go “smoke-free” as well.

“Hospitals and their surrounding communities are to be commended for coming together in support of healthy hospital campuses, and leading the way for hospitals nationally,” commented Ms. Jackson. “The serious health risks and costs associated with tobacco use are well documented. By going completely smoke-free, hospitals in Connecticut have demonstrated a commitment to preventing smoking-related illnesses for the benefit of individuals and communities alike.”

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The Connecticut Hospital Association has been dedicated to serving Connecticut’s hospitals since 1919. Through state and federal advocacy, CHA represents the interests of Connecticut’s not-for-profit hospitals on key healthcare issues in the areas of quality and patient safety, access and coverage, workforce, public health, and hospital reimbursement.