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*** FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE ***

86 Wyoming schools adopt Tobacco-free Schools of Excellence policies; Local school districts advocate for healthy school environment surrounding tobacco use

CHEYENNE - Students from eighty-six Wyoming schools are celebrating their school's adoption of the Wyoming Tobacco-free Schools of Excellence criteria, Wyoming Department of Health officials said today.

To date, 109 schools in the state have received the award, sponsored by the state departments of health and education. Schools are awarded for providing strong tobacco policies that not only prohibit tobacco use on school grounds, in vehicles, and at school sponsored events, but also include tobacco cessation and education components for students and staff, said Wyoming Department of Health director, Dr. Brent Sherard.

"Schools are in a particularly powerful position to prevent kids from smoking and to help those who already use tobacco to quit," Sherard said. "School-based programs can reach children and teenagers when they are most vulnerable to using tobacco or before their tobacco use has become a strong addiction."

According to a baseline 2003 School Tobacco Policy Survey, only 36 percent of Wyoming's school districts reported that youth were given the opportunity to quit using tobacco through a school-sponsored program. Only 13 percent of the state's school districts reported that staff were offered the opportunity to quit tobacco use through a school-sponsored cessation service. At that time also, no districts had yet adopted all eight Tobacco-free Schools of Excellence criteria.

In summary, the Wyoming Tobacco-free Schools of Excellence eight criteria are:

- School has a policy prohibiting tobacco use all school property and in school vehicles.
- Schools enforces the tobacco-free policy.
- Students who use tobacco are provided the opportunity to participate in a program designed to help them quit tobacco use.
- Students who are cited for tobacco use are directed to a local youth cessation program.
-Staff members who use tobacco are directed to an adult cessation service.
-The school provides specific instruction about tobacco use at every grade level.
-The school sponsors a active and meaningful youth involvement to address tobacco issues.
-Staff and students participate with Tobacco-free Wyoming Community projects.

"Research indicates that simply using punitive measures to control tobacco use on school grounds is not an effective process,"said department of health Tobacco Prevention and Control Program Coordinator, Janet Jares. "Offering an alternative to punishment such as a referral to a tobacco education class or a voluntary cessation group is much more effective."

Jares said school-based programs must be carefully designed and will work best when they are part of a broader school, community, and state effort to reduce youth smoking.

Wyoming communities were awarded a total of $630,000 to implement the Tobacco Free Schools of Excellence Program over the past three years. Funding for this grant is obtained from the Wyoming Legislature's appropriation of the Tobacco Settlement Income Account. Under the program, school

districts must implement eight criteria surrounding tobacco control on all school property, by school staff, all students, parents and visitors.

The project promotes a strong school district policy, enforcement of the policy, tobacco education and cessation opportunities, as well as a curriculum component and opportunities for community collaboration and the formation of a local youth coalition.

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Campbell County School District #1 is among the districts to be recognized as a Wyoming Tobacco-Free School of Excellence.

“We are very excited to be among the first school districts to have achieved full-circle buy-in on a tobacco-free policy,” said Dr. Richard Strahorn, Superintendent of Campbell County Schools. "The criteria are stringent and it has required real commitment and collaboration to attain this goal. Tobacco is by far the leading cause of preventable death and disease in America so any measures that we can bring in to prevent the next generation from carrying on the economic and human burden presented by tobacco are worth it. This is just one way that we can create healthy environments in which students thrive.”

Debbie Reid, Campbell County Tobacco Prevention Program Manager, said, “We are thrilled about the support the school district and the community have shown in this process. The project is supported by our teachers, students, and administrators, and by the community at large. A Tobacco-Free school environment is one part of a comprehensive community plan for tobacco-prevention. Creating a healthy school environment has been shown to assist students in achieving academic success.”

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Awards were made to these school districts and local schools:
Districts:

Big Horn County School District #1
Campbell County School District #1
Crook County School District #1
Hot Springs County School District #1
Lincoln County School District #1
Lincoln County School District #2
Teton County School District #1
Uinta County School District #1
Uinta County School District #4
Washakie County School District #1
Weston County School District #1

Schools:

Byron Elementary
Cowley Elementary
Deaver Frannie Elementary

Lovell High School
Lovell Middle School
Lovell Elementary

Westwood High School
Wright Junior & Senior High School
Campbell Co High School

Sage Valley Junior High School
Twin Spruce Junior High School
Little Powder Elementary
Recluse School
4-J Elementary
Conestoga Elementary
Cottonwood Elementary
Hillcrest Elementary
Lakeview Elementary
Meadowlark Elementary
Paintbrush Elementary
Pronghorn Elementary
Rawhide Elementary
Rozet Elementary
Sunflower Elementary
Wagonwheel Elementary
Stocktrail Elementary

Sinclair Elementary
Mountain View Elementary
Highland Hills Elementary

Bear Lodge High School
Hulett High School
Moorcroft High School
Sundance High School
Hulett Junior High
Moorcroft Junior High
Sundance Junior High
Hulett Elementary
Moorcroft Elementary
Sundance Elementary

Hot Springs County High School
Thermopolis Middle School
Lucerne Intermediate School
Ralph Witters Elementary School

Johnson Junior High School
McCormick Junior High School
Carey Junior High School
Churchill Elementary
Corlett Elementary

Kemmerer Elementary School
Kemmerer High School
Kemmerer Middle School
Kemmerer Alternative School

Star Valley High School
Star Valley Middle School
Afton Elementary
Osmond Elementary

Jackson Hole Middle School
Summit High School

Jackson Hole High School
Alta Elementary
Colter Elementary
Jackson Elementary
Kelly Elementary
Moran Elementary
Wilson Elementary

Evanston High School
Aspen Elementary
Clark Elementary
North Evanston Elementary
Uinta Meadows Elementary
North Evanston Elementary
Evanston Middle School
Davis Middle School

Mountain View High School
Mountain View Elementary
Fort Bridger Elementary
Mountain View Middle School

Worland High School
Southside Elementary
Westside Elementary
Eastside Elementary
Worland Middle School

Newcastle Elementary
Newcastle High School
Newcastle Middle School
Kitty Moats Elementary

This brings the total to 109 schools
And 14 districts

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For more information, please contact:

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