

Western New York Tobacco-Free Champions Recognized

BUFFALO, NY - The Western New York Tobacco-Free Programs recognized more than 180 businesses, organizations and individuals who championed tobacco-free policies throughout the region. The annual recognition program was held June 8th at the Westwood Park, Lancaster.

“Erie and Niagara County tobacco-free champions were honored for their leadership, vision and dedication in making their neighborhoods, schools and environments healthy and smoke-free,” said Anthony Billoni, Director of the Erie-Niagara Tobacco-Free Coalition.

Josh Haeick, President of the Niagara Frontier Recreation and Parks Society and Recreation Leader for the Village of Hamburg Recreation Department, offered the keynote address. Judge Henry Nowak and Buffalo Common Council Member Bonnie Russell received the prestigious Leonard Pleasant – New Voice Club Tobacco-Free Advocate of the Year Award. Miss Teen of America, Carlene Miller received the Tobacco-Free Youth Advocate of the Year Award.

Western New York Tobacco-Free Programs together strive to change the community environment in support of tobacco-free norms. The programs include the Erie-Niagara Tobacco-Free Coalition, the Tobacco Cessation Center - North; Erie and Niagara County Tobacco-Free Schools Programs and Erie & Niagara County Reality Check.

The Erie-Niagara Tobacco-Free Coalition acknowledged several community and business organizations who have led the way in Smoke-Free Parks, Entrancesways and Housing. The Coalition has also worked with the City of Buffalo, University District Council Member Bonnie Russell and City of Buffalo Housing Court Judge Henry Nowak to pass the Landlord Disclosure Law. City of Buffalo landlords must now clearly state their smoking policy in leases and rental agreements. This groundbreaking legislation is the first of its kind to be adopted in New York State.

The Tobacco Cessation Center-North recognized healthcare providers for the completion of the Performance Improvement Project in Treating Tobacco Dependence and healthcare professionals at area Federally Qualified Health Centers for systemic changes to their operations and health care guidance provided to patients who smoke. The Tobacco Cessation Center - North provides evidence-based training to healthcare organizations and providers according national guidelines.

The Erie County Tobacco-Free Healthy Schools program, which provides resources and support to schools throughout the region for the development, implementation and

enforcement to tobacco-free school policies, recognized Emerson School of Hospitality, Middle Early College High School and the Cheektowaga Central School District.

Realty Check is a youth movement committed to exposing the deceptive marketing tactics of the tobacco industry. The organization works to eliminate all the ways the tobacco industry reaches out to children in our communities. Realty Check asks that parent groups such as PTA's and other community organizations sign resolutions that support the elimination of smoking in kids movies. This year they recognized the leaders in this initiative.

“Policy makers and health advocates strive daily against the harmful effects of tobacco but the real life champions are the individuals in schools, offices and healthcare centers who are dedicated to reducing and eliminating the devastating toll of tobacco use for all of us,” said Kate Huber, Coordinator of Tobacco Free Healthy Schools Program.

For more information about the Western New York Tobacco Free Programs, visit www.wnytfp.com or call 716.845.1615.