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Vermont Department of Health's New Campaign Encourages Young Women to Be Smoke-Free *Vermont Women Share Their Success Stories to Inspire Others to Quit*

Burlington – The Vermont Department of Health hopes to raise awareness of the negative impacts of smoking on young women by sharing inspirational success stories from Vermont women who have quit the habit and improved their health.

More than one in five (21.5 percent) of Vermont women ages 18 to 29 smoke cigarettes. According to the surgeon general, lung cancer is now the leading cause of cancer death among U.S. women. About 90 percent of all lung cancer deaths among women who smoke are attributable to tobacco use. Women who smoke also develop more wrinkles, and they develop them at a much younger age. And, they often have a harder time staying in shape because of breathing problems.

Some of the benefits of quitting smoking mentioned by Vermont women include: Being able to hike without getting winded; staying healthy and reducing the risk of severe asthma, chronic bronchitis and cancer; and keeping kids healthy and being healthy for them.

“Studies show that smoking can reduce women’s life expectancy by an average of 14 years. The earlier women quit smoking, the greater the benefits, but smoking cessation is beneficial at all ages,” said Health Commissioner Sharon Moffatt, RN, MSN. “We strongly encourage women, and all Vermonters, to take advantage of the free resources available in our state. Especially because ‘quit coaching’ through the Vermont Quit Line or the hospital-based **Ready, Set...STOP** program can double the chances of quitting successfully.”

Bridget and Crystal were just two of the young women who came forward to share their personal stories as part of the new Women’s Health Campaign, in hopes of motivating other women to quit smoking:

- “I constantly had headaches and was always short of breath. Then I began to suffer from chronic bronchitis,” said Crystal, a 25-year-old Post Mills resident who has been tobacco-free for nine months. When she began smoking at age 16, Crystal saw it as a way to alleviate stress. After she began to see the negative effects smoking was having on her well-being and her overall health, she decided to quit for good. Crystal reports that she now feels healthier and happier, and she works out every day.
- Bridget, a 26-year-old student and mother from Burlington, said, “Quitting smoking is empowering! Smoking is a huge crutch, and quitting is like being able to walk without crutches.” Bridget quit smoking on July 4, 2006, when she found herself getting winded and not being able to exercise like she used to. She saw the negative effects smoking was having on her health and quit to ensure she lives as long as possible so that she can be there for her son. “Since quitting, I feel much better mentally and physically,” she said.

A new series of TV ads was developed by the Department of Health to reach women across the state. The ads highlight real Vermont women sharing their experiences with tobacco and kicking the habit. In addition, the Department’s network of statewide partners – such as, community coalitions and hospital-based **Ready, Set...STOP** programs – will be distributing free Women’s Health headwear, fact sheets and postcards that feature tips and resources available to help women successfully quit smoking. In addition, partners will be hosting unique events and activities in their communities.

The Vermont Department of Health encourages all Vermonters who have quit smoking to share their success stories. Vermonters can log on to TobaccoStories.org to share their own reasons for quitting as well as the ways they became smoke-free.

Vermonters interested in quitting can also call the Vermont Quit Line toll-free at 1-877-YES-QUIT (1-877-937-7848), contact the **Ready, Set...STOP** program at their local hospital, or log onto VermontQuitNet.com.

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