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Governor's Foundation for Health & Wellness

NASHVILLE Health

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**Contacts: Shelley Walker**, TN Department of Health  
615-253-5184  
**Molly Sudderth**,  
Gov. Foundation for Health and Wellness  
615-610-1879  
**Kristen Hayner**, NashvilleHealth  
615-496-3223

## ***Leaders Kick Off 2017 Quittin' Time in Tennessee***

*Highlight importance of community and government partners to help Tennesseans quit smoking*

**Nashville, Tenn.** – State leaders and officials today reignited a call to reduce tobacco use in Tennessee, sharing a collective commitment to helping Tennesseans quit the habit.

Holding a press conference alongside several attending leaders from the state's government, business, and non-profit organizations, Tennessee Department of Health Commissioner John Dreyzehner, MD, MPH, Governor's Foundation for Health and Wellness CEO Richard Johnson, and NashvilleHealth Founder Senator Bill Frist, MD, discussed the many opportunities available to citizens who are ready to quit.

"For most people, once they are hooked, it is incredibly hard to break the addiction to nicotine," said Dreyzehner. "As hard as it may be to believe, the evidence suggests nicotine is more habit forming than many other drugs, even opioids like heroin. For young people, this can lead to a lifelong struggle, so we are eager to help anyone who's ready to start the journey to live free of this burden with a bunch of free resources. But maybe the most important thing is having someone to help. Even with the support of your family, a professional can help you get it done and make it last. No one should have to tackle nicotine addiction alone."

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) most recent data, 21.9% of Tennesseans smoke (2015), with 22% of adults in Davidson County smoking (2014). While the state-wide number shows a drop from 2014 levels, leaders noted that at least 30 Tennesseans die each day from tobacco use. In addition, the CDC recommends that cities reach a 12% threshold for

adults who smoke.

“These numbers are unacceptably high,” said Frist. “Nashville is an ‘it’ city with record economic growth, a thriving tourism industry, and beautiful places to live and raise a family – all of which is echoed across the state. Yet, this status cannot be sustained if our community health, in particular our excessive tobacco use, is not addressed head on. This is a rallying cry for us all to continue the excellent work being undertaken by our state’s innovative leaders and organizations, so that we can change the statistics...and definitely save lives.”

If current smoking rates continue, 125,000 Tennessee children alive today who are younger than 18 years of age will die prematurely as a result of smoking. In addition to the negative impact on people’s health and lives, the habit is costly to the state. Annually, health care costs directly related to tobacco use reached \$2.67 billion.

### **RESOURCES AVAILABLE**

Resources available to Tennesseans represent a broad commitment to and focus on helping those who want to quit be successful. Resources like these proven, effective services can double a tobacco user’s chances of quitting.

- The [Tennessee Tobacco QuitLine](http://www.tnquitline.org) - **1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669)** or [www.tnquitline.org](http://www.tnquitline.org) - offers call-based and online free help for those making their decision to quit. The initiative uses a web-based program or offers in-person counseling services, and may provide free FDA-approved nicotine replacement therapy.
- NashvilleHealth recently launched a new page – Help Me Quit ([www.nashvillehealth.org/HelpMeQuit](http://www.nashvillehealth.org/HelpMeQuit)) - that brings together event news and tools for Tennesseans to use, including smartphone apps, social media resources, and information from insurance organizations for those who want to quit, along with other resources from partner groups statewide.
- Healthier Tennessee offers a series of free, online wellness tools that encourage and enable tobacco abstinence. Available at [www.healthiertn.com](http://www.healthiertn.com), the Small Starts toolkits provide simple, effective steps that people can take to quit tobacco, get more physical activity, and eat healthier.

“We know how hard it is to quit the addiction to nicotine that comes with smoking and tobacco use, and we understand the temptations that are presented to teens and preteens to use tobacco in Tennessee, but through our grassroots effort in more than 70 communities across the state, we are working with local citizens and leaders to help Tennesseans walk away from tobacco,” said Johnson.

### **ABOUT THE TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

The mission of the Tennessee Department of Health is to protect, promote, and improve the health and prosperity of people in Tennessee. TDH has facilities in all 95 counties and provides direct services for more than one in five Tennesseans annually as well as indirect services for everyone in the state, including emergency response to health threats, licensure of health professionals,

regulation of health care facilities, and inspection of food service establishments. Learn more about TDH services and programs at [www.tn.gov/health](http://www.tn.gov/health).

#### **ABOUT THE GOVERNOR'S FOUNDATION FOR HEALTH AND WELLNESS**

The Governor's Foundation for Health and Wellness is a non-profit corporation dedicated to enabling and encouraging Tennesseans to lead healthier lives. Based in Nashville, the Foundation brings together a statewide coalition of employers, health insurers, hospital systems, local governments, school systems, and healthcare-focused foundations and community organizations to effect positive, measurable change. The Foundation's Healthier Tennessee initiative strives to increase the number of Tennesseans who are physically active for at least 30 minutes five times a week, promote a healthy diet, and reduce the number of people who use tobacco. Learn more at [www.healthiertn.com](http://www.healthiertn.com).

#### **ABOUT NASHVILLEHEALTH**

NashvilleHealth brings the region's health care, business, clinical, academic, government, and non-profit organizations together as partners in creating a culture of health and wellbeing in Nashville. Promoting open dialogue, aligning resources, and creating smart strategic partnerships, NashvilleHealth will continually identify major population health challenges and forge dynamic plans to improve the health of all Nashvillians. Ultimately, NashvilleHealth's goal is to make Nashville one of the healthiest places to live in the state and nation by achieving measurable gains in the health of all residents. More information can be found at [www.nashvillehealth.org](http://www.nashvillehealth.org).

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