



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

RSA Tower 201 Monroe Street, Suite 914 Montgomery, AL 36104

Phone 334-206-5300 Fax 334-206-5534

www.adph.org

Renowned speakers to address tobacco use - the leading cause of preventable deaths in the U.S.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Diane Beeson
(334) 206-5560

Brooke Thorington
(334) 206-3830

Inspirational speakers including UAB Coach Pat Sullivan and Dr. Jeffrey Wigand whose life inspired the movie "The Insider" will address the 2005 Advocacy Conference for Tobacco Free Alabama. The conference will be held Feb. 17 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Heritage Baptist Church, 1849 Perry Hill Road, Montgomery.

"Tobacco use is very costly in terms of lives lost and both direct and indirect medical costs," said Dr. Jack Hataway, director of the Chronic Disease Prevention Division, Alabama Department of Public Health. "Tobacco is the leading cause of preventable death in the country, and an estimated \$1.17 billion is spent in Alabama each year to treat smoking-related illnesses."

Nationally, tobacco use accounts for 440,000 deaths each year. In Alabama, 640 to 1,150 adults, children and babies will die this year from secondhand smoke and 7,400 adults will die from their own smoking. Thirteen thousand children in the state will become new daily smokers in 2005, and in the course of a lifetime over 111,000 Alabama children under 18 eventually will die prematurely from smoking. In addition, numerous studies show that youth tobacco use is a gateway to illegal drug and alcohol abuse among teens.

The conference topic is "Now We Know. Do Something!" This theme recognizes how serious the problems associated with tobacco use are. Former football great Pat Sullivan has become a strong advocate against smokeless tobacco use. He used smokeless tobacco for 25 years before his diagnosis of oral cancer in the fall of 2003. Wigand is a former vice president of Research and Development at a large tobacco corporation and is the highest ranking former tobacco executive to address public health and safety.

Carla Hammonds, executive director of Tobacco Free Alabama, stated, "It is time for us to do something positive about tobacco. That is why our coalition is sponsoring an Advocacy Conference. We want to train adults and youth to become effective advocates in the fight to prevent and reduce tobacco use in our state."

Tobacco Free Alabama will provide CEUs for a variety of professionals.

Attendees will have opportunities to network with others interested in advocating for local tobacco-free ordinances in public places such as restaurants. Attendees will learn how to advocate for employer-sponsored incentive programs to help employees quit and how to help

communities reduce and prevent youth tobacco use. Health professionals will be challenged to take a more active role in local tobacco prevention and use reduction efforts.

Youth leaders and their teacher sponsors from the Alabama Peer Helpers organization will participate in the general sessions and attend their own youth workshop tracks.

For a complete list of speakers and workshop tracks visit:
www.tobaccofreealabama.org/Conference.htm. Register online at www.tobaccofreealabama.org or call 334-324-7510 to request a registration packet.

1/18/05

NOTE TO EDITORS:

On Jan. 16 Dr. Wigand appeared on 60 Minutes again, years after his legendary 1996 interview which revealed the tobacco industry knew of the dangers of cigarettes but yet still marketed them as safe for health.

Dr. Wigand spoke on how his life has changed since he exposed the tobacco industry and how he now works for policy changes around the world to promote clean air and warns of the dangers of cigarette smoking and secondhand smoke.