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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ORANGE COUNTY MARKS SIGNIFICANT TOBACCO PREVENTION ANNIVERSARIES

Orange County, NC (January 6, 2014) - January marks two major milestones in tobacco prevention and control efforts, one national and one local.

2014 marks the [50th anniversary of the first Surgeon General's Report on Smoking and Health](#). "Since 1964, smoking prevalence among U.S. adults has been reduced by half. Unfortunately, tobacco use remains the leading preventable cause of disease, disability, and death in the United States, according to the Surgeon General's office.

January 2014 also marks the one year anniversary of Orange County's [Smoke-Free Public Places Rule](#), initiated and passed by the Orange County Board of Health and later approved by the Board of County Commissioners. The Smoke-Free Public Places Rule prohibits smoking indoors anywhere the public is invited or allowed regardless of private business ownership and outside on property owned and/or controlled by the County or municipalities.

The emphasis of the rule, rather than issuing citations, has been to educate the public on the effects of secondhand smoke, minimize exposure to secondhand smoke, and reduce the number of youth exposed to and subsequently taking up smoking. In the past year, the Orange County Health Department undertook an extensive education and awareness campaign to promote cessation services and make people aware of the Smoke-Free Public Places Rule. Through grant funding, ads were placed on buses,

billboards, [television](#), and in newspapers and magazines. In addition, more than 600 permanent smoke-free signs have been placed throughout the county and within its municipalities. Window clings are also available at multiple locations throughout the county for business owners to pick up and display in their windows.

Another way the health department is working to decrease the harmful effects of smoking is by continuing to offer cessation services, including free Nicotine Replacement Therapy, for members of the public who wish to quit.

At the time of implementation, an [information and complaint line](#) was set up. In the past year, 11 complaints were received via the hotline. Of the complaints received, four were valid and responded to, two could not be verified, and the remaining five were for areas not covered by the rule, including one from Orange County California.

One of the major discussion points over the past year has been around enforcement. Representatives from each of the municipality's law enforcement agencies as well as the Sherriff's Department and the Health Department have been meeting to address the issue.

"We have not issued any citations yet and are hoping for voluntary compliance in all of our encounters." stated Captain Chris Atack of the Carrboro Police Department.

The Health Department is also responding to reports of areas with high prevalence of smoking by sending smoking response teams out to educate people about the rule. To date, response teams have gone out 11 times and at least once to each of the County's municipalities.

"We are feeling good about the transition to a county with smoke-free public places and significant reduction in exposure to secondhand smoke. We'll continue to work with our law enforcement and other partners to educate people about where smoking is not allowed" stated Dr. Colleen Bridger, Health Director.

"While our officers are having conversations with people who are smoking in public places, we want to reiterate that education and enforcement are everybody's responsibility," shared Chapel Hill Police Chief Chris Blue.

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