

St. Louis Regional Asthma Consortium
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BREATHE EASIER DURING ASTHMA AWARENESS MONTH

April 26, 2006 (St. Louis) – The St. Louis Regional Asthma Consortium and Tobacco Free Missouri, St. Louis Coalition have teamed up to help St. Louis breathe a little easier. May is Asthma Awareness Month and these two organizations are doing their best to get the word out about asthma, its management, and the serious health and economic impacts of secondhand smoke on people with asthma and on the region.

St. Louis ranks among the top ten worst cities in the nation for asthma. In some areas of the region as many as one in five children are affected by asthma—three times the national average. Asthma is the most common chronic childhood disease and the number one cause of hospitalization among children under 15 years of age. Nationally, asthma accounts for one-sixth of all pediatric emergency room visits. African American or other minorities have a greater chance of having asthma and have more hospitalizations, emergency room visits, and death because of their asthma. According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, asthma is the leading work-related lung disease.

Asthma is a chronic disease that can range from mild to life-threatening. Asthma attacks can be triggered by many things, including allergens, respiratory infections, heavy exercise, exposure to chemicals or fumes, and smoke. Exposure to secondhand smoke (also known as environmental tobacco smoke or passive smoking) can trigger asthma attacks and can make asthma symptoms more severe.

Asthma attacks can be reduced by avoiding the indoor and outdoor triggers that can cause attacks, having regular doctor visits, and proper treatment. An important part of managing asthma is educating people with asthma and their families about how to control their disease.

The St. Louis Regional Asthma Consortium and Tobacco Free Missouri, St. Louis Coalition have joined forces to educate the people of our region about the effects of smoking and secondhand smoke on people with asthma and other respiratory illnesses. Many people do not realize that even the non-smoking section of restaurants and other establishments can be putting them at risk. Two hours in a typical non-smoking section is the equivalent of smoking one and a half cigarettes. Secondhand smoke is the third leading cause of preventable death in the United States. On a more local level, smoking costs Missourians nearly \$2 billion dollars a year in health care expenses and \$2.3 billion is lost productivity.

In honor of World Asthma Day on May 2 and World No Tobacco Day on May 31, the St. Louis Regional Asthma Consortium and Tobacco Free Missouri, St. Louis Coalition are sponsoring a smoke free day and “Cosmic Bowl” at Tropicana Lanes in Richmond Heights, Missouri. Patrons can bowl in a smoke free environment throughout the day or can join the fun from 5:00 to 7:00 PM at a “Cosmic” bowling experience. The cost of the “Cosmic Bowl” is \$10.00 per person and includes shoe rental, unlimited bowling during “Cosmic” hours, laser and black lights, disco music, and, of course, lots of fun. Information on asthma, smoking cessation, and smoke free restaurants and establishments in the St. Louis area will be available during the “Cosmic Bowl.”

For more information about the smoke free day at Tropicana Lanes or to reserve a lane for the “Cosmic Bowl” contact the St. Louis Regional Asthma Consortium at (314) 977-8253 or Tobacco Free Missouri, St. Louis Coalition at (314) 977-8104 or visit their web sites at www.asthma-stlouis.org or www.tobaccopreventioncenter.org.

To learn more about the St. Louis Regional Asthma Consortium and Tobacco Free Missouri, St. Louis Coalition and the work they do, visit their web sites at www.asthma-stlouis.org and www.tobaccopreventioncenter.org.