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NEWS RELEASE

COALITION URGES STORES TO SHIELD CHILDREN FROM TOBACCO ADS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DELAWARE, Oh., June 24, 2010 – After checking cigarette and spit tobacco displays in 50 local stores, members of the Tobacco-Free Delaware County Coalition are asking retailers to help prevent children from being enticed by tobacco.

Letters sent to the 50 Delaware-area retailers ask them to place tobacco products away from candy and toys, to limit advertising pushing tobacco, and to not show tobacco or tobacco advertising at children's eye level.

Tobacco-Free Delaware County volunteers visited the stores in recent weeks as part of a nationwide program called Store ALERT (Advocates Limiting Exposure to Retail Tobacco). The program is part of the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids. Store ALERT provides volunteers with report cards to quantify stores' tobacco displays and advertising and assess the likelihood that children could be enticed.

Coalition volunteers visited 40 of the same stores last year. Part of this year's effort was to check whether advertising patterns had changed because of the new U.S. Food and Drug Administration tobacco ad restrictions that went into effect this week. Volunteers also kept an eye out for candy-flavored cigarettes and other products banned under the year-old federal law – and fortunately found none in Delaware County.

The coalition volunteers suggested that parents and other residents should share their concerns about tobacco advertising with the managers of stores in their neighborhoods. In-person customer complaints about tobacco near candy or toys or tobacco ads at children's eye level might motivate managers to make immediate changes.

"I am concerned about my grandchildren and their peers smoking. I don't want them influenced to light up or put another form of tobacco in their mouths," said Paul Damron, one of the coalition volunteers.

"I'm 70 years old and still can't figure out what good tobacco does in any form," added Len Fisher, the Coalition Chairman.

The letters to stores include the new federal restrictions on tobacco sales and marketing, which include:

- No cigarette or smokeless tobacco sales to minors (less than age 18). Although such sales have been prohibited by state laws for some time, this is the first time they are prohibited by federal law, and the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act also establishes new federal enforcement efforts, including compliance checks.
- No vending machine sales or self-service displays of cigarettes or smokeless tobacco except in adult-only facilities.
- No sales of cigarettes in packages of fewer than 20 cigarettes. Sales of loose cigarettes or mini packs can increase youth use.
- No branded sponsorships of athletic or cultural events by cigarette or smokeless manufacturers, distributors or retailers.
- No free samples of any tobacco products, except limited free samples of smokeless tobacco products allowed in temporary adult-only facilities in certain restricted situations.

The Tobacco-Free Coalition praised one local store manager who voluntarily removed some tobacco ads at children's eye level after speaking with the coalition volunteer who was grading the store.

The Tobacco-Free Delaware County Coalition was formed by the Delaware General Health District to spearhead long-term efforts to reduce harm caused by tobacco, our society's leading cause of preventable illness and premature death. To get involved, contact Linda Diamond at 740-203-2016 or ldiamond@delawarehealth.org. The Coalition is partially funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Tobacco-Use Prevention and Cessation Program through the Office of Healthy Ohio, Ohio Department of Health.