

MEDIA ADVISORY: Photo Opportunity

May 6, 2008

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Students making a difference in North Port

As part of the North Port Community Health Action Team (CHAT) focus on reducing substance abuse among youth in that community, the CHAT is recognizing North Port High School Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT) for their efforts to promote health among teens at the city's only high school. The recognition will take place on Thursday, May 8 at 8:40 a.m. in the campus cafeteria, 6440 W. Price Boulevard in North Port.

SWAT is a student-led effort engaged in the relentless fight against the tobacco industry and its manipulation and targeting of youth to use their product. It was a major outcome of the 1998 Tobacco settlement resulting from the State of Florida suing the tobacco industry for the increasing Medicaid expenses caused by tobacco related diseases across the state.

North Port High's SWAT group has 27 members. This year's activities have included demonstrations to draw attention to the 88 people who die each day in Florida due to tobacco-related illnesses. They have also conducted a peaceful protest in North Port to help stop the sale of cigarettes to minors.

The **Community Health Improvement Partnership (CHIP)** is the coordinating entity for the CHATs. CHIP is comprised of local health departments, hospitals, non-profit organizations and funding dedicated to improving the health of Sarasota County residents. CHIP also works with Charlotte and DeSoto counties to foster change in health systems across the region. Community groups, called Community Health Action Teams (CHATs) in Englewood, North Port and the Laurel/Osprey/Venice/Nokomis (LOVN) and Newtown meet monthly to implement action plans to promote health and wellbeing among residents in those communities.

CHIP is funded by the Gulf Coast Community Foundation of Venice, the Community Foundation of Sarasota, Sarasota County Health Department, Sarasota County Government, Sarasota Memorial Hospital, Venice Regional Medical Center, Doctors Hospital, Peace River Regional Medical Center, Charlotte Regional Medical Center, Fawcett Memorial Hospital, Englewood Hospital, Charlotte County Health Department, DeSoto County Health Department, and DeSoto Memorial Hospital.

For more information about other CHAT activities, call Diane Ramseyer at 941-650-4856 or visit the website at www.chip4health.org. For more information on SWAT, call Crystal Bruce at 941-861-2876 or visit the SWAT Sarasota website at <http://www.swatssc.net/>.

PHOTO OPPORTUNITY

North Port Community Health Action Team (CHAT) Recognizes North Port High School Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT)

Thursday, May 8; 8:40 a.m.

North Port High School Cafeteria, 6440 W. Price Blvd., North Port 34286

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