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News Release

*For Immediate Release*

**Neighborhood Effort Aims to Help Smokers Quit**

The Springfield-Greene County Health Department and the Healthy Living Alliance (HLA) have teamed up to help a group of smokers quit the habit and improve their lives.

A group of 20 people from the Robberson neighborhood are currently enrolled in the health department's six-week Freedom From Smoking course. The course is an effective way for tobacco users who are truly ready to quit learn how to best overcome their addiction. The sessions are held at 6 p.m. on Tuesday evenings at Robberson Elementary School, 1100 E. Kearney St., through March 13 (enrollment is full for the current session). Healthy meals are provided by the Healthy Living Alliance and Caring Communities at 5:30 p.m. for all participants.

HLA has also partnered with dietetics students from Missouri State University to provide a nutrition class for children, which coincides with the Freedom From Smoking course, to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to attend. Children attend the nutrition class while parents attend the smoking cessation class.

"It's hard enough to quit smoking as it is," said Dustin Lair, HLA Coordinator. "And with our busy schedules today, it becomes that much harder to make healthy choices, even if a person wants to change. By providing free childcare during the Freedom From Smoking classes, we're hoping to make it just that much easier for people to do the right thing for themselves and their families."

Healthy Living Alliance works specifically with schools and businesses in Springfield to connect them to existing community organizations that tackle obesity and tobacco use. In addition to this current class aimed at residents of the Robberson neighborhood, HLA has worked with Robberson residents to offer pedestrian safety assemblies through the help of Safe Kids Springfield, and is considering starting a bicycle club for students at Robberson Elementary School.

Freedom From Smoking is a program offered through the Springfield-Greene County Health Department and the American Lung Association to help people quit smoking. The program is unique in that participants don't quit immediately; instead, they target a quit date to work toward. The program provides key social and group-based support leading up to and beyond the quit date. HLA is partnering with the program in one additional way: providing nicotine replacement therapy to help participants quit.

Members of the media may visit any of the upcoming Freedom From Smoking courses. Some participants are available to speak about the opportunities provided by this partnership.
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