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PRESS RELEASE

March 20, 2009
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Capital High School Teens Make a Difference **Tobacco Prevention Presentations to Area 4th Graders**

Helena- Thanks to policies like Montana Clean Indoor Air Act and tobacco taxes, along with education and cessation support, kids in Helena are using less tobacco products than they were in 2002. Based on student self-reporting in the Montana Prevention Needs Assessment (PNA) of 2006, the percentage of Helena School District students who reported smoking within the past 30 days has decreased 9% since 2002. Students who reported using smokeless tobacco also declined 25.9%. Statewide, the rate of youth smoking in Montana has dropped to 16%.

The Montana Tobacco Use Prevention Program (MTUPP) uses comprehensive tobacco prevention programming to prevent youth from starting tobacco use, to help Montanans who want to quit their addiction, and to reduce exposure to secondhand tobacco smoke. According to the Centers for Disease Control, the more a state spends on sustained comprehensive tobacco prevention programs, the greater the reductions in tobacco use

One local group that plays an important role in tobacco use prevention programming in our community can be found in the halls of Capital High School. Link Crew is a service-learning class at CHS that offers students real-life experience in being community leaders. To be accepted into one of the two Link Crew classes, incoming juniors and seniors must demonstrate communication skills, leadership potential, responsibility, and personality traits that have helped them succeed in the high school environment. Teacher, Kelley Morand facilitates unique experiences for her students to make a real difference in the Helena Community.

Over the last five years, Link Leaders have worked closely with the Lewis and Clark County Tobacco Use Prevention Program to educate 4th grade students about the dangers of tobacco and how tobacco marketing targets kids. During the month of March, Link Crew will be visiting 4th grade classrooms throughout the district- providing a fun, fact-filled tobacco prevention and media literacy curriculum that encourages students to create their own tobacco counter ads. "I am doing this work because I don't want these kids to grow up thinking that smoking is normal or cool- because it's not," says Cassie Shaver, a senior at Capital High School.

Upcoming Link Crew Presentations:

- **Tuesday, March 24th** - Hawthorne 4th grade classes.
- **Friday, March 27th** - Kelly Schenk's 4th grade class at Four Georgians.

“Tobacco Companies spend \$43 million dollars here in Montana every year in an attempt to recruit new smokers,” says Darby Bramble, Tobacco Use Prevention Specialist. “The presentations provided by Link Crew students, help to counter the messages from the tobacco industry—reminding Helena kids that smoking is not normal.”

“We want to bring an awareness about the harmful effects of tobacco and tobacco products. Teaching kids at an early age will keep them away from the short and long term effects of these products,” says Andrew Gluekert, Capitol High senior.

Link Crew advocates remind the community that **March 25th is Kick Butts Day**—a nationally recognized day where youth speak up and take action against big tobacco through education and advocacy.

If you know a teen who is interested in joining this growing movement of teens against big tobacco, contact Darby Bramble at 447-8363. If you are looking to break your tobacco habit, the Montana Tobacco Quit Line provides free assistance to all tobacco users. The Quit Line provides a personalized quit plan, free telephone coaching, free nicotine replacement therapy (the patch, gum, or lozenges) or discounted Chantix, a new tobacco cessation drug. Calls are toll-free at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (784-8669).

The mission of the Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department is to improve and protect the health of all Lewis and Clark County residents.

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