National Birth Defects Prevention Month-January Template -- Draft 12/4/15

For Immediate Release: **(INSERT DATE)**

Contact: **(INSERT NAME, PHONE NUMBER)**

**Pregnant Women Can Prevent Birth Defects by Quitting Smoking**

**(CITY, WI)** -- January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month, and this year members of the **(COALITION/NETWORK NAME)** are encouraging all pregnant women who smoke to kick their addiction. Quitting tobacco comes with numerous benefits for both mother and child, but health advocates say it’s especially relevant to the birth defects conversation because smoking during pregnancy can cause birth defects like cleft lips and/or cleft palates (which means the lip or palate doesn’t form completely).

**“INSERT QUOTE HERE ABOUT HOW MOMS WHO QUIT SMOKING GET BABIES STARTED ON THE RIGHT FOOT. ANOTHER POWERFUL QUOTE COULD COME FROM A DOCTOR TALKING ABOUT WHAT A CLEFT LIP/PALATE REALLY LOOKS LIKE. THIS DOCTOR QUOTE WOULD WORK WHETHER THEY ARE JUST STATING FACTS OR TALKING FROM PERSONAL EXPERIENCE.”**

In addition to the risk for cleft lips and palates, the carbon monoxide in cigarettes also keeps the fetus from getting enough oxygen, which can lead to tissue damage in the fetus, particularly in the lungs and brain.

In addition to lowering the risk of birth defects, quitting smoking while pregnant can provide other benefits to mothers and their babies, like **(INCLUDE EXAMPLES FROM THIS LINK:** [**http://www.wwhf.org/programs/first-breath/women/**](http://www.wwhf.org/programs/first-breath/women/)**).**

Quitting smoking is already stressful, and being pregnant at the same time can add to that stress. Thankfully mothers don’t have to do it alone. Free help is available through Wisconsin’s First Breath program, which has helped thousands of pregnant women quit smoking through non-judgmental counseling and support.

**“INSERT QUOTE ABOUT FIRST BREATH AND HOW IT HELPS PREGNANT WOMEN QUIT. IF YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO IS TRAINED ON FIRST BREATH, GET A QUOTE FROM THEM ON HOW IT WORKS AND HOW THEY’VE SEEN IT HELP OTHERS. ANOTHER EFFECTIVE QUOTE COULD COME FROM A FORMER PARTICIPANT HELPED BY FIRST BREATH.”**

Pregnant women who smoke and want to quit can contact the First Breath program at 1-800-448-5148 or visit their website at <http://www.wwhf.org/programs/first-breath/women/>. Friends and family of those women who are also tobacco users themselves can show their support for their loved one and get free help to quit by calling the Wisconsin Tobacco Quit Line at 1-800-QUIT NOW.

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