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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Tolland County residents can enjoy smoke free parks and public open areas this summer

Tolland County residents may notice some new signs around Coventry, Mansfield, Tolland, Chaplin and Scotland's parks, trails, playgrounds, beaches and athletic fields reminding people that there are "YOUNG LUNGS AT PLAY" so there is no room for second hand smoke. Other signs in buildings will remind people that there is No Smoking in municipal buildings such as community centers or town halls.

Some fun, comical signs will be seen along the towns hiking trails in Coventry to let people know that cigarette butts are harmful to wildlife and when improperly discarded, they can start fires.

The Eastern Highlands Health District (EHHD), the local public health agency for ten area towns in Tolland County, has been part of a 3 year effort to promote active living, tobacco-free living, healthy eating, and clinical preventive services. A community coalition established through the Community Transformation Grant received by Eastern Highlands Health District in 2011 has worked hard to influence policy makers and the public at large that tobacco-free public parks are becoming the norm in more and more places across the state and nation.

"Making these parks tobacco-free makes sense, says Robert Miller, EHHD Health Director, It protects users from the well-documented dangers of secondhand smoke, eliminates unsightly and unhealthy litter, and gives our residents the opportunity to model tobacco-free behavior – a powerful tool in teaching our children how to be healthy adults".

The Community Health Action Response Team (CHART) has also worked on the development and distribution of two smoke free tool kits to encourage and guide all towns in Tolland County to adopt ordinances or policies to bar smoking in parks and multi-unit housing units.

For more information please contact Rita Kornblum, EHHD Community Health and Wellness Coordinator at (860) 429-3325 or kornblumrl@ehhd.org