

Media Inquiries: Kristin Jones at krjones@stvincents.org or (203) 576-6431

St. Vincent's Teen SmokeStoppers Program Helping Stratford High School Students Quit

Stratford and Bridgeport, CT, December 15, 2008 – St. Vincent's Teen SmokeStoppers Program, funded by St. Vincent's SWIM Across the Sound, has helped eight male students from Bunnell High School quit using smokeless tobacco, or "dipping," and aims to add 20 more to the roster.

Snuff, a finely ground shredded tobacco that is either snorted through the nose or pinched and placed between the cheek and gum, and chewing tobacco, shredded tobacco that is wadded up and placed inside the cheek, are often thought of by teens as "safe" alternatives to smoking.

Other names for smokeless tobacco are dip, chew and spit. On the contrary, smokeless tobacco is just as dangerous. It contains 28 different cancer-causing carcinogens and one in three users will develop oral cancer. Other risks associated with smokeless tobacco are nicotine addiction, leukoplakia, gum disease and gum recession. Elevated risks of heart disease, diabetes, and reproductive problems are possible.

The Teen SmokeStoppers Program, led by educators Mary Ellen Bolcer and Susan Richards, provides free interactive Teen Smoking Prevention and Cessation Classes in schools throughout the state. To date, more than 110 Connecticut schools have participated in the program and more than 100,000 teens have been touched by it.

According to Bolcer, "It is so sad, because these kids actually think that dipping is safer than smoking cigarettes, but they couldn't be more wrong. According to statistics, one in three of these kids will develop mouth cancer within the next five years. They have no idea what they are doing to their bodies. It's disgusting stuff."

The age-appropriate Prevention Classes allow students to compare a healthy, preserved human lung with one that is diseased from smoking so that students can see the astonishing effects cigarettes have on their bodies. The presentation also allows students to test their allergic and strength reactions to nicotine and to participate in other interactive activities demonstrating the dangers of tobacco use.

Teen SmokeStoppers also offers Cessation Classes, which consist of eight sessions divided into three stages. The first stage, prepares teen tobacco users psychologically and physically for the quitting experience, the second stage offers the techniques, guidance and structure necessary for cessation during critical first days of nicotine withdrawal and the final stage creates a system that addresses transition needs and eases the way to permanent cessation.

The program has helped more than 5,700 teens quit smoking and using tobacco.

Bolcer says she will be back at the school on January 7 and again January 12 through January 15, 2009 to teach a Cessation Class. "The first group of eight boys who have all quit have recruited 20 more of their friends to take the class, so I will back for nearly a week to work with them. I'm afraid smokeless tobacco use is increasing in popularity amongst teenage boys," she said.

For more information about St. Vincent's Teen SmokeStoppers Program, call St. Vincent's Medical Center Foundation at (203) 576-5451.

St. Vincent's SWIM Across the Sound

St. Vincent's SWIM Across the Sound is a charitable, grass roots organization run by St. Vincent's Medical Center Foundation. For 21 years, the SWIM has had a unique niche, providing cancer education, screening and prevention programs at low- or no-cost for the elderly and underserved. In addition, the SWIM helps individual cancer patients on a case-by-case basis with specific needs, such as the funding of wigs and prostheses, medication assistance, free transportation to treatments and appointments, day-care scholarships, support groups and more. The charity raises funds through events such as the SWIM Marathon, Breast Cancer Luncheon, Walk/Run for Cancer and Prostate Cancer Celebrity Dinner. Wherever possible, the SWIM covers costs and expenses of events through corporate sponsorships, and staffing overhead is covered by the St. Vincent's Medical Center Foundation. The SWIM's main area of reach is eastern Fairfield County, but outreach programs extend to other areas of Connecticut with the SWIM's Hartford Chapter and annual fund raisers for New Haven County, as well

as support for Connecticut's first responders and correction officers with cancer. The SWIM's Teen SmokeStoppers program has reached 100,000 children throughout the entire state to date. The SWIM raised \$2.65 million in the 2008 fiscal year and helps more than 20,000 people annually. For more information, contact the St. Vincent's Medical Center Foundation at (203) 576-5451 or visit www.swimacrossthesound.org.

St. Vincent's Medical Center

St. Vincent's Medical Center is a 397-bed acute care, community teaching and referral hospital providing a full range of inpatient and outpatient services with regional centers of excellence in cardiology, surgery, cancer care, orthopedics, diagnostics, women's and family services, behavioral health, senior health and an array of specialized services. St. Vincent's Medical Center is a subsidiary of St. Vincent's Health Services, which include Hall-Brooke Behavioral Health Services, St. Vincent's College, St. Vincent's Special Needs Services, and St. Vincent's Immediate Health Care Centers. It is a member of Ascension Health, the nation's largest Catholic healthcare system. St. Vincent's is a teaching affiliate of the University of Connecticut School of Medicine and New York Medical College. The Medical Center is also sponsor of SWIM Across the Sound, one of the nation's largest hospital-based cancer prevention and patient support programs. For referral to a St. Vincent's physician or about programs and services, call the toll-free Care Line at 1-877-255-SVHS (7847) or visit www.stvincents.org.