



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 6, 2007

**Rodeo project awarded grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation  
focusing on restricting tobacco sponsorship and marketing**

LAS VEGAS – The Regional Tobacco-Free Rodeo Project (RTFRP) of the Oakland-based Public Health Institute announced today that it received a \$100,000 grant to provide rodeo governing boards with the tools to restrict tobacco use, advertising and free sample distribution at local rodeos in California, Idaho, Nevada and New Mexico. The initiative is one of 21 projects supported by *Tobacco Policy Change: A Collaboration for Healthier Communities and States*, a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF).

“Rodeo is a sporting event not a spitting event,” said Andrea Craig Dodge, director of the Regional Tobacco-Free Rodeo Project ([www.bucktobacco.org](http://www.bucktobacco.org)). “We’re concerned that tobacco industry marketing gives kids in the audience the message that chewing tobacco is part of being a cowboy.”

The project is working with the Southern Nevada Health District and the Washoe County District Health Department to limit tobacco sponsorship of rodeos around the state, as well as partners in California, Idaho and New Mexico that are working to provide rode governing boards with the tools to restrict tobacco sponsorship of local rodeos.

“The health district is excited to work on this project to get the word out that there is no safe tobacco, whether it is smoked or chewed,” said Dr. Donald S. Kwalick, chief health officer. “We are in favor of limiting advertising messages about its use to audiences.”

While 40 years of tobacco control efforts have produced significant reductions in smoking, there continues to be a compelling need for advocacy and education efforts focused on the dangers of tobacco use and exposure. Each year tobacco use kills 440,000 Americans, and over 7,000 people in this country die from oral cancers.

Nationwide, one out of 10 teenage boys uses smokeless tobacco (also called spit tobacco), according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Smokeless tobacco can lead to oral cancer, gum disease, nicotine addiction, and an increased risk of cardiovascular disease. In Nevada, 6 percent of high school students use spit tobacco, an increase since 2003.

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Rodeo Grant Awarded – add one

“It is vital that people who live and work in places hit hardest by tobacco have a say in making their communities healthier places to work and raise a family,” said Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, M.D., M.B.A., RWJF president and CEO. “The work of the Regional Tobacco-Free Rodeo Project reflects a focused, community-based approach targeted in areas that suffer disproportionately high rates of tobacco use, exposure to secondhand smoke and related diseases.”

Today’s announcement marks the third round of three one-year grant awards, which vary in range from \$75,000 to \$150,000. Including today’s grant announcements, *Tobacco Policy Change: A Collaborative for Healthier Communities and States* is providing up to \$12 million in support of tobacco prevention and cessation policy initiatives, especially in those areas where tobacco continues to have its most devastating consequences.

The Regional Tobacco-Free Rodeo Project and the Buck Tobacco Sponsorship Project, both programs of the Public Health Institute, work to end tobacco sponsorship of rodeos. The projects are currently funded by three sources in addition to RWJF funds, including a litigation settlement negotiated by the City and County of San Francisco and the Environmental Law Foundation; California Proposition 99; and the American Legacy Foundation.

For more information on this program and others supported by RWJF, visit [www.rwjf.org](http://www.rwjf.org).

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