

April 11, 2007

MAYOR BLOOMBERG ANNOUNCES RECORD 89% OF BUSINESSES DO NOT SELL CIGARETTES TO UNDERAGE KIDS

Record High Compliance a Result of City's Aggressive Efforts to Curb Teen Tobacco Use

DCA's Teens Conduct Record Number of Undercover Inspections

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) Commissioner Jonathan Mintz today reported a record number of City businesses do not sell cigarettes to underage kids. As a result of the City's aggressive efforts to curb teen smoking, 89% of all businesses are complying with tobacco laws, while another record 91% of businesses stopped making illegal sales after being caught by DCA's undercover inspectors - up from 72% just two years ago. Mayor Bloomberg and Commissioner Mintz were joined for the announcement by Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Commissioner Dr. Thomas R. Frieden and Dr. Jeffrey Wigand, anti-tobacco advocate and Founder of the non-profit organization SMOKE-FREE KIDS, who addressed middle school students at Leonardo Da Vinci Intermediate School I.S. 61 in Queens - a diverse community where one in six residents is a smoker.

"The groundbreaking policies we have pursued since the earliest days of this Administration have helped record numbers of adult New Yorkers succeed in stopping smoking, but even more importantly we're succeeding in preventing children from becoming smokers in the first place," said Mayor Bloomberg. "This year, the number of businesses refusing to sell cigarettes to kids has reached an all time high, and this is definitely one measure where you want your numbers to go up. With the average life expectancy of New Yorkers going up and cigarette sales to minors going down, our efforts to promote a healthier city are clearly paying off."

"With our Youth Tobacco Enforcement and Prevention Program, we are conducting more undercover inspections than ever, and through the Mayor's leadership, raising compliance to levels never before seen," said Commissioner Mintz. "While we're thrilled with the program's success and high compliance, our teams continue to go undercover every day to make sure all businesses do the right thing and communities are protected. Parents and kids can be the most helpful by reporting stores that make illegal sales."

Since DCA's Youth Tobacco Enforcement and Prevention Program began in 1998, overall compliance among City businesses has increased from 52% to a current record 89%. In Fiscal Year 2006, DCA conducted a record 16,300 undercover inspections citywide. For Fiscal Year 2007 to date, DCA has conducted nearly 11,000 undercover inspections. Currently, the Bronx, Manhattan, and Queens share the highest rate of compliance among businesses with 89%, followed by Brooklyn at 88%, and Staten Island at 86%.

"Nine out of ten New York City high school students do not smoke," said Health Commissioner Frieden. "And it is encouraging to see that more and more vendors are getting the message that selling cigarettes to kids is disgraceful as well as illegal. Our programs are working and our kids are benefiting."

"I'm honored to be here today to help support New York City's on-going effort to reduce teen smoking," said Dr. Jeffrey Wigand. "The tobacco industry continues to target young people with messages encouraging them to smoke. Only through a combination of advocacy, enforcement, and smart public health policies can we combat those influences and protect our children from the health problems associated with tobacco. As a native New Yorker myself, I am proud to see New York City and its mayor leading the way. Ground-breaking policies like the Smoke Free Air Act have greatly improved public health and will save an untold number of lives both here in New York City, and in the cities and countries around the world that are now following New York's example."

Dr. Wigand's support was instrumental to the passage of New York City's Smoke Free Air Act of 2002, a successful policy that has been replicated in numerous cities and countries around the world. Through his

non-profit organization, SMOKE-FREE KIDS, Dr. Wigand speaks to school-aged children about the tobacco industry and their use of the media, the entertainment industry, sports events, music and deceptive advertising as a way of introducing children to tobacco. Dr. Wigand shared his knowledge of the industry and uses scientific methods of discovery, industry data and documents to explain how the industry targets kids and youth.. This education process enables kids to make their own healthy decisions. Dr. Wigand has received numerous awards and public recognition for shining the light on tobacco industry research and marketing practices and he continues his efforts to reduce teen tobacco use through SMOKE-FREE KIDS.

The New York City Youth Tobacco Enforcement and Prevention Program employs teens between the ages of 15 and 17 to work undercover accompanied by agency inspectors. The teens are paid \$7.25 an hour, plus Metro Cards and are required to take a no-smoking pledge. Daily inspections are conducted at stores year-round in all five boroughs. DCA's Youth Tobacco Enforcement and Prevention Program is made possible by a New York State grant administered by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. In addition to running the Youth Tobacco Enforcement and Prevention Program, DCA licenses approximately 11,000 tobacco retailers in New York City.

Retailers who do not obtain proper proof of identification before making a sale are cited by DCA and face City fines of \$1,000 for the first offense and \$2,000 for the second, plus possible license revocation. Licenses are revoked for a minimum of one year. Retailers found guilty also face State fines of a maximum \$1,000 for the first offense and \$1,500 for each thereafter, plus tobacco and lottery license revocation.

To report a business illegally selling cigarettes to kids, or for more information, including educational brochures and employee training programs, call 311 (or 212-NEW-YORK outside New York City), or visit www.nyc.gov.