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Tobacco Smoke a Strong Trigger for Asthma Problems

There has never been a better time to remind parents that tobacco smoke is a strong trigger for asthma, meaning breathing it can cause asthma attacks, when breathing passages become narrow and irritated, causing coughing, wheezing and difficulty breathing. Asthma is a common respiratory disease that affects one in 10 North Carolina children and is a common reason for school absences. Children with asthma are more likely to visit emergency rooms than children without asthma. An asthma attack can be frightening, and can even be life-threatening. Avoiding triggers like secondhand smoke can keep a child with asthma out of the emergency room.

One of the most proven methods to keep asthma under control is to remove all asthma triggers from the home and school environment. Asthma triggers vary from patient to patient, but too often include tobacco smoke. Parents of children with asthma can help by only smoking outside the home, but the best way to eliminate danger for children with asthma is to quit smoking if you are a parent or another adult who spends time with children.

A great first step is to make your home and car smoke-free zones, which keeps the inside air safe for everyone. If you are responsible for a child with asthma, do not take them into smoky environments, and do not allow others to smoke around them. If you live in an apartment or other multi-unit housing that is not smoke-free indoors, consider working towards making your building smoke-free. A smoke-free policy can save money, reduce fire risk and will make everyone healthier-not just those with asthma.

If you or someone you know wants to quit smoking, QuitlineNC can provide free help 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Call (1-800-784-8669) or, for Spanish speakers, 1-800-Dejelo-Ya (1-800-335-3569). For more information, visit www.QuitlineNC.com. For information on asthma and the N.C. Asthma Alliance, visit www.asthma.ncdohhs.gov. For information on smoke-free multi-unit housing visit www.smokefreehousingnc.com.

Veteran Services Office Offers Help with Benefits & Eligibility

The Anson County Veteran Services office which is headed up by Ted Ward is available to all veterans. They offer information about the many services and benefits for veterans, will help determine eligibility and even help fill out the paperwork involved to receive benefits.

If you are a veteran of the United States Military and do not know your status of eligibility in regards to medical benefits, home loans, burial benefits or other services, then you need to talk with a Veteran Services Officer. In Anson County the office is located at 111 North Greene Street (the former Belk building). The telephone number is 704-694-4418 or you can email Ted Ward at tward@co.anson.nc.us.

Here is a partial list of services available to veterans:

- **Compensation** - The VA compensation program provides monthly benefits if you are disabled because of an injury or disease incurred in or aggravated during your military service.
- **Pension** - You can receive a monthly pension if you are a wartime veteran with limited income, and you are permanently and totally disabled, or at least 65 years old.
- **Healthcare Benefits** - Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom veterans are eligible for five years of free medical care from their last date of discharge from active duty. This benefit covers illnesses and injuries, except those clearly unrelated to active military services. All veterans, young and old, should be enrolled in the VA healthcare system. Once enrolled, most veterans will remain enrolled without further action on their part. However, certain veterans are required to provide income information to determine their priority level.
- **Burial Benefits** - At the time of death, every veteran with an honorable discharge deserves the respect and honor of a military funeral. Burial benefits include a gravesite in any VA national or state cemetery with available space, the opening and closing of the grave, a government headstone or marker, a burial flag, and a Presidential Memorial Certificate. The Veterans Benefit Administration pays a burial and plot allowance to those veterans eligible by law. The next of kin or funeral director must provide the cemetery staff with a copy of the veteran's properly signed DD214 form or discharge papers.
- **Education and Training** - The main requirement for education benefits is discharge from active duty service under honorable conditions.
- **Home Loan Guarantee** - The VA housing loan program is available to service members, veterans, reservists, and unmarried surviving spouses for the purchase of primary homes, condominiums, manufactured homes or for refinancing loans.
- **Other Benefits** - Other benefits include dependent pensions, vocational rehabilitation, job assistance and NC benefits, such as children's scholarships, license plates, high school diplomas, hunting and fishing licenses for disabled veterans, and property tax relief.

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