

Recording Artist MIKE-E and American Cancer Society Launch Nationwide Anti-Tobacco College Tour

Tour will Educate Young Adults on the Dangers of Tobacco Use

Atlanta 2009/02/05 -The American Cancer Society is taking a unique approach to engaging college students in a dialogue about tobacco use by collaborating with international recording artist and poet, Michael "MIKE-E" Ellison on his nationwide Afroflow Tour. The Afroflow Tour, which will visit about 20 college campuses starting with Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Va. on Feb. 6, 2009, will use spoken word and musical performances to raise awareness about and educate students on the health risks involved with tobacco use, encourage them to avoid tobacco products, and ask students to join the American Cancer Society in its efforts to combat smoking.

According to the American Lung Association, 19 percent of college students smoke regularly. Studies show that most adolescents who become regular smokers continue to smoke into adulthood. Because the likelihood of developing smoking-related cancers, such as lung cancer, increases with the duration of smoking, those who start at younger ages and continue to smoke are at highest risk for cancer and other diseases.

Major cigarette companies spend more than \$13 billion every year on advertising, including marketing their products to appeal to children and young adults. Since prohibitions were put in place in 1998 on marketing to youth under age 18, the tobacco industry has turned its marketing efforts to reaching college age young adults, ramping up advertising strategies to include magazines with a large youth audience and sponsoring college-related events, such as concerts and events at bars in college towns. The American Cancer Society hopes to combat the tobacco industry's marketing practices through efforts including the AfroFlow Tour.

"The American Cancer Society has been fighting back against tobacco for decades, and through our work with MIKE-E and the Afroflow Tour, we are reaching out to college students to encourage them to take charge of their own health and reject tobacco," said Linda Blount, MPH, national vice president of health disparities, American Cancer Society. "By educating young people about the importance of staying well and avoiding tobacco use, we can reduce the future cancer burden and save lives. In the U.S., tobacco use is responsible for one in five deaths, and accounts for at least 30 percent of all cancer deaths and 87 percent of lung cancer deaths."

"As artists, it is a privilege to match our music with a cause that is much greater than us," said MIKE-E. "We're proud to continue our work with an organization that is truly demonstrating its commitment to serve the community through education and awareness, and taking new, innovative approaches to doing so."

An emerging trend among adolescent and young adult smokers is the use of tobacco waterpipes or "hookahs." While there are no national estimates of the use of this product, adolescent and young adults are more likely to be susceptible to its use because of the marketing and promotions of hookah bars and cafes targeting these groups and the misconceptions about the harms of tobacco use from hookahs. Use of tobacco in any form may induce nicotine dependence.

The 2009 Afroflow Tour marks the Society's second engagement with MIKE-E and his tour in reaching out to college students about tobacco. The first collaboration took place in March 2007 through the Society's South Atlantic Division when the AfroFlow tour visited Historically Black Colleges and Universities in six states - Delaware, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia. More than 15,000 students attended the concerts and heard anti-smoking messages, and many students became involved in Society efforts such as Colleges Against Cancer and Relay For Life. For more information on the Afroflow Tour and the tour schedule, visit [the AfroFlow website](http://www.afroflow.com), or <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytK0aTr3m2s>

MIKE-E is an international Hip-hop and spoken word recording artist, actor, philanthropist and youth motivator. He was born in Ethiopia, where he supports orphan outreach and health care programs and maintains nationwide recognition with one of the country's most popular hits "Ethiopia (Everything Will Be Alright)," Stateside, the Detroit-based lyricist is recognized for repeat performances on HBO's Def Poetry Jam, appearing regularly in nationally televised spoken word vignettes for the National Football League.

Smokers who want to quit can call the American Cancer Society Quitline, a confidential, free counseling service. Callers to 1-800-227-2345 will talk with a trained counselor to establish a quit plan. Studies have found that Quitline can more than double a person's chances of successfully quitting tobacco. In addition, callers to Quitline can be connected with smoking cessation resources in their communities, social support groups, Internet resources, and medication assistance referrals.

The American Cancer Society is dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem by saving lives, diminishing suffering and preventing cancer through research, education, advocacy and service. Founded in 1913 and with national headquarters in Atlanta, the Society has 13 regional Divisions and local offices in 3,400 communities, involving millions of volunteers across the United States. For more information anytime, call toll free 1-800-ACS-2345 or visit www.cancer.org.

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