



Charlie Crist
Governor

Ana M. Viamonte Ros, M.D., M.P.H.
State Surgeon General

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Jennifer James-Mesloh
Email: Jennifer_James-Mesloh@doh.state.fl.us
Phone: (239) 332-9561 - office

Strike Out Youth Tobacco Use **- Tobacco-Free Coalition Offers FREE Baseball Tickets -**

Fort Myers, FL- Ten thousand (10,000) free baseball tickets to the Ft. Myers Miracle and Saint Lucie Mets game are being given away by the Tobacco-Free Lee Coalition to bring awareness concerning the dangers of youth using candy flavored tobacco products. The game is on Friday, May 7th at 7:05 pm and is being held at Hammond Stadium in Ft. Myers.

These 10,000 free tickets are made available to all youth and their accompanying adults.

Tickets may be picked up at the:

- Lee County Health Department,
- 3920 Michigan Avenue, Ft. Myers, FL
- 8:00 am – 4:00 pm
- Tuesday, Thursday and Friday of this week and next week

Rick Bender a former baseball player who has had extensive portions of his jaw removed due to cancer caused from tobacco use will throw out the first pitch. Bender will also discuss how tobacco companies have been marketing candy flavored tobacco products that appeal to youth and mask the harsh tobacco taste so often associated with such products.

The Tobacco-Free Lee Coalition is sponsoring this event because among Lee County middle-schoolers, 5.7 percent currently reported smoking within the last 30 days and 18.4 percent of high-schoolers reported doing so. The statewide average rates were 5 percent and 14.5 percent, respectively.

The first 750 fans will receive a custom designed stadium seat cushion and the evening will include games, prizes, entertainment and information about the dangers of youth using tobacco products.

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Judith A. Hartner, M.D., M.P.H., M.P.A. • Director
3920 Michigan Avenue • Fort Myers, FL • 33916
www.LeeCHD.com



“The Tobacco-Free initiative is a community partnership that brings together organizational resources to decrease the rate of tobacco users in Lee County. We truly want to lower the numbers of youth who are starting smoking or tobacco use because our children are the future of this county, so their health is a major concern.” said Brendan Donohue, tobacco program specialist, Lee County Health Department.

Among the coalition’s top goals are changing policies that allow candy flavored advertisements, partnering with the health care community to target tobacco users with a tobacco cessation intervention opportunity and encourage multi-unit dwellings to be tobacco-free.

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