

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ASTHMA COALITION LAUNCHES AIR QUALITY FLAG PROJECT

The Cleveland County Asthma Coalition in collaboration with the Alliance for Health in Cleveland County, Inc. and the Cleveland County Family YMCA and partnering with Cleveland County Schools launched the Air Quality Flag project on Monday, May 8, at Marion Intermediate School in Shelby.

The Air Quality Flag Project is a multi-colored flag system that will act as a daily indicator of outdoor air quality. Air quality is a trigger for individuals with asthma or other respiratory diseases. Participating sites received a set of four color flags (green, yellow, orange and red) at no charge. They will also receive email announcements daily from the North Carolina Air Awareness office in Charlotte operated by the North Carolina Division of Air Quality. These daily forecasts will project the air quality for the Charlotte region for the following day and participating sites will raise the appropriate color flag. The color of the flag can serve as a guide for the schedule of outdoor activities that day for individuals with asthma. The color code established by the North Carolina Division of Air Quality is:

Green Flag: Good – no health effects expected

Yellow Flag: Moderate – unusually sensitive people may consider limiting

outdoor activity

Orange Flag: Unhealthy for sensitive groups – children, active people and those with respiratory or heart disease should limit outdoor activity

Red Flag: Unhealthy for all – everyone limit or avoid outdoor activity

Participating sites will also receive educational information to distribute to parents or participants to further explain this project.

Participating schools include Marion Intermediate School, James Love Elementary School, Union Elementary School, Casar Elementary School, Shelby Middle School and Shelby High School. Sites in Kings Mountain include West Elementary School, Davidson School and the Kings Mountain YMCA. Additional sites where the flags will be flown include the YMCA facilities in Cleveland County, First Baptist Church Child Day Care, Kids World Day Care, TLC Day Care, Image Design and Marketing, Shelby City Parks and Recreation and the Cleveland County Health Department. Participation in the project was voluntary.

The Cleveland County Asthma Coalition was founded in spring 2002 through a grant from the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health, to the Cleveland County Health Department. The Coalition is composed of individuals representing multiple organizations and the community at large, including people with asthma and parents of children with asthma. Meetings are held on the fourth Wednesday of each month from 12 noon to 1:00 p.m. in the 2nd floor conference room at the Cleveland County Health Department. Membership is open to any individuals interested in asthma or affected by asthma. There is no membership charge. Pam Ellwood and Lynne Bridges are the current co-chairs of the Coalition.

Additional projects sponsored by the Cleveland County Asthma Coalition include Basic Asthma Education classes taught at the Dover Foundation Family YMCA on the 3rd Thursday of each month, the No-Wheeze Asthma Camp at Dover Foundation Family YMCA for children ages 8 – 12 with asthma (this year scheduled for July 17 – 21), an Asthma Expo held annually in conjunction with

Healthy Kids Day, a nebulizer loaner program, an Asthma Hotline at 704-484-5195 available to answer questions about asthma resources and a coaches clipboard project which will be initiated in August, 2006. The Coalition recently presented its programs at the North Carolina Asthma Summit held in Burlington, NC in March 2006. Because of the strength of this coalition and its ability to work collaboratively, the Cleveland County Health Department has received \$20,000 in grant funding to work with 16 counties across the Piedmont to develop or strengthen local asthma coalitions.

For additional information about the Air Quality Flag project, those interested in participating should call the Asthma Hotline at 704-484-5195 or the Alliance for Health office at 704-484-5112.

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