



SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

Serving Monroe County and Wayne County (excluding the city of Detroit)

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Hookah Smoking Focus of Public Health Forum – May 15th

Expert panel to discuss potential dangers of new tobacco trend

Taylor, MI, May 7, 2007 – A public health forum titled “Hooked on Hookah,” A New Trend in Tobacco Smoking, will dispel myths associated with a tobacco trend spreading in communities across metro Detroit. Hosted by the Southeast Michigan Community Alliance (SEMCA), this event takes place on Tuesday, May 15th from 9 a.m. – noon at the Wayne County Community College District Downriver Campus, located at 21000 Northline Road in Taylor. To RSVP for this free forum, the community can call 734.229.3530.

According to a report from the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, rates have dropped for Michigan teens who engage in the use of tobacco and alcohol. “Yet, there is still a need to educate the public because there is a misperception that smoking the Hookah is different than cigarette smoking,” said Theresa Webster prevention administrator for SEMCA.

The purpose of this forum is to bring awareness that smoking the Hookah is just as harmful as smoking cigarettes. Hookah smokers may inhale the same amount of smoke as consuming 100 or more cigarettes during a 40 – 45 minute session, according to the American Lung Association.

“It has especially gained popularity among teens that can’t drink alcohol and desire a social network,” she said. “Teens are attracted to the idea of smoking the Hookah because they feel like adults,” said Webster.

“Vendors are becoming more creative of novel flavors and service techniques,” said Dinah Ayna, coordinator for the substance abuse prevention program for ACCESS. “Consequently, making it more attractive to youth whose usage is increasing in numbers,” she said.

On the other hand, Hookah smokers say it’s better than smoking cigarettes. “It’s not an addictive thing like smoking three packs of cigarettes a day,” said Ali Aldhalimi, local restaurant Hookah server. “I use to smoke cigarettes, but now I smoke the Hookah,” said Aldhalimi.

Experts say there are health effects associated with smoking the Hookah. “Our lungs have the capacity of a tennis court,” said Jeff Callebs, prevention coordinator for Wayne County. “When you release Hookah smoke from your lungs, you are exposed to all the toxins you would otherwise get when smoking cigarettes,” said Callebs.

“Through education, we hope to begin collaborations with government, law enforcement and community agencies to fight this form of tobacco smoking among youth,” said Ayna.

This event is sponsored by SEMCA in partnership with the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services, the Arab-American and Chaldean Council, the Wayne County Department of Public Health and the Knopf Company.

The Southeast Michigan Community Alliance (SEMCA) administers human service programs throughout Wayne and Monroe counties excluding the city of Detroit.

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