*Family Physicians Partnering to Improve Access to Healthcare and Education*

**FFI: Kara Sinkule January 22, 2020**

**Georgia Healthy Family Alliance (404) 321-7445**

**Georgia Healthy Family Alliance Partners With Floyd Health System and Floyd Healthcare Foundation To Educate Youth On the Dangers of Tobacco, Vaping and E-Cigarettes**

 **Rome, Ga.** – In response to the alarming increase in the use of vaping and e-cigarettes among adolescents, Floyd health system, Floyd Healthcare Foundation, and local physicians are partnering to reverse the trend.

The Georgia Healthy Family Alliance (GHFA) announced today that Floyd health system and Floyd Healthcare Foundation will give an anchor gift of $100,000 to support the Rome Strike Force initiative. This project will allow local health care professionals, organizations, and school leadership, to educate school children on the dangers of smoking and vaping.

The gift from the Floyd health system and Floyd Healthcare Foundation, which supports the mission of the Floyd health system, will go toward the implementation of the Tar Wars anti-tobacco and anti-vaping program in all Floyd, Polk and Chattooga county schools as well as Rome and Trion City Schools. GHFA is the philanthropic arm of the Georgia Academy of Family Physicians and has set a goal of raising $250,000 to allow students access to the program for multiple years.

“Vaping is an urgent issue here in Floyd County and across the nation. It is critical to educate not only students but parents, teachers and health care professionals on the dangers of e-cigarettes,” said Lauren Adams, Director of the Floyd Healthcare Foundation. “Floyd Healthcare Foundation is proud to partner with the Georgia Healthy Family Alliance and Floyd Medical Center to provide this vital information to our children and community.”

“At home in our Rome, I see the harmful effects this vaping habit has on our community and more specifically our children,” said Rep. Katie Dempsey, R-Rome. “With the recent vaping-related injuries and deaths in Georgia, there could not be a better time for this initiative. I am honored to work with the Georgia Healthy Family Alliance and Rome Strike Force to help provide anti-smoking/vaping education and awareness to our children. I am so grateful to community partners like Floyd Medical Center and the Floyd Healthcare Foundation for their support on this very important initiative.”

According to the Georgia Student Health Survey administered by the Georgia Department of Education, vaping use among Rome middle schoolers increased by 79% between in the past year, and vaping use among Rome high schoolers increased by 100% during the same period.

Erin Hernandez, President & CEO of Northwest Georgia Regional Cancer Coalition, said Northwest Georgia experiences higher than average tobacco use rates and incidences of lung cancer.

“Research shows that very few people begin smoking after their teen years — 89% began before age 18!” Hernandez said. “It is vitally important that our regional health care partners and organizations work together to prioritize youth tobacco and vaping prevention programs to reduce the burden of cancer in our communities.”

Dr. Patrick Lynn, a family physician at Floyd Medical Center, is chairman of the Rome Strike Force.

“I have been watching the trend in vaping among kids and teens for several years and have noticed it's usage and popularity spiking,” Dr. Lynn said. “I see it as a threat to our children's health and an entire generation of adolescents. My kids are young, but I know they could also face this problem if we don't begin to limit their exposure to tobacco in all forms, especially vaping,” he added.

Some schools in the region already have had some exposure to the Tar Wars program and are excited for this program to scale and reach thousands of students who have not yet received this vital education and resource. Georgia Healthy Family Alliance plans to initiate the implementation of the Tar Wars program during the 2020 school year.

The Georgia Healthy Family Alliance is the philanthropic arm of the Georgia Academy of Family Physicians (GAFP). Established in 1947, the GAFP is a member chapter of the American Academy of Family Physicians. The GAFP strives to promote the health of the citizens of Georgia by advancing the specialty of Family Medicine through education, advocacy and service to family physicians in the State of Georgia. For more information about our foundation, visit [www.georgiahealthyfamilyalliance.org](http://www.georgiahealthyfamilyalliance.org) or call 404-321-7445.

 -30-