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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Burlington Partnership for a Healthy Community Announces Winners of School District Secondhand Smoke Poster Contest

- Winning posters will ride local CCTA buses -

BURLINGTON (May 23, 2011) – The Burlington Partnership for a Healthy Community is pleased to announce the winners of the Burlington School District Secondhand Smoke Poster Contest. The winner from Burlington High School (BHS) is Madison Francois and the winners from Hunt Middle School (HMS) are Emily Ax and Emilia Nunez. CCTA donated the ad space to the Burlington Partnership for a Healthy Community and the Burlington High School START (Students Taking Action and Risks Together) Group to for two winning posters with messages to remind the community about the negative impact of secondhand smoke and the importance of protecting the Burlington youth who use the city bus as their transportation to school. The poster contest submissions were voted on by Burlington Mayor Bob Kiss, Burlington School Board Commissioner Jill Evans, CCTA Bus Driver Thomas Bridges and VT Dept. of Health Tobacco Control Media Specialist Yvonne Zietlow.

According to the U.S. Surgeon General, “The debate is over. The science is clear; secondhand smoke is not a mere annoyance, but a serious health hazard.” The 2010 Surgeon General’s report says, “There is no safe level of exposure to tobacco smoke. Any exposure to tobacco smoke – even an occasional cigarette or exposure to secondhand smoke – is harmful.” For this reason, this winter teens from BHS’s START Group connected with Burlington’s local substance abuse prevention coalition The Burlington Partnership for a Healthy Community wanting to do something about complaints of people smoking at the bus stops and their exposure to secondhand smoke. Burlington high school and middle school kids use public transportation as their bus to school and were concerned about people who would smoke next to the bus stops or inside the bus shelters (even though they are designated non-smoking). Working together, the Burlington Partnership along with representatives from Burlington High School and CCTA designed a plan to raise awareness about this issue. They created a poster contest for Burlington High School and Middle school students. Students were asked to create a posters would raise awareness about secondhand smoke and encourage smokers to step away from the bus areas.

Lucas LaBounty, a Burlington High School Junior, was one of the teens who helped to start this project after being inspired by another VT youth group who were able to pass a town ordinance to ban smoking in a park near their school. When asked why he was interested in persuing this effort, Lucas said, “There’s no reason we shouldn’t try to make our community as healthy as possible.”

When Thomas Bridges, CCTA Bus Driver was asked why he was interested in participating in the vote said, “My goal as a CCTA Driver is to deliver our customers where they need to go, safely and in a timely manner. I am pleased to know that Burlington students are concerned about the health of others and are interested in maintaining the quality of life for our riders in and around our bus stops.”

About the Burlington Partnership:

The Burlington Partnership for a Healthy Community is a coalition of Burlington residents, businesses, school and college representatives, medical professionals, law enforcement officials, court representatives, parents, youth and more who recognize that the damages of drugs, alcohol abuse and tobacco affects us all. The coalition works together to create a healthier environment in Burlington for everyone in the community to succeed.