**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 8, 2019 CONTACT PERSON:

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**E-Cigs & Youth: Harming Brain Development with Each Puff**

Brain Awareness Week Kicks off March 11th

Kearney, NE --- Have you seen your kid’s USB flash drive laying around lately? It could actually be an electronic cigarette (e-cigarette) and contain nicotine.

Brain Awareness Week kicks off March 11 and both Two Rivers Public Health Department and Buffalo County Tobacco Free Coalition want to remind parents and youth that there is no safe amount of nicotine for youth. Because brain development is underway until age 25, youth nicotine use can damage parts of the brain that control attention, learning, mood and impulse control.

Across the country, youth e-cigarette use is on the rise, particularly among middle and high school students. In 2017, 9.4% of Nebraska youth reported using an e-cigarette in the last 30 days, surpassing the youth cigarette smoking rate

 “Part of the problem is that many youth don’t realize that e-cigarettes contain nicotine and without that knowledge of risk, the variety of fruit and candy flavors can seem very appealing,” said Kim Burr of Buffalo County Tobacco Free Coalition. “But it is the low emissions and discreet size that make it difficult for parents to detect when their child is using e-cigarettes.”

Parents play a very important role in preventing continued growth of this public health threat. Parents can:

* Learn about the different types of e-cigarettes and risk of e-cigarette use for young people at <https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/>.
* Adopt tobacco-free rules, including e-cigarettes in their home and vehicle.
* Let their child know they want them to stay away from e-cigarettes because they are not safe. Seek help from healthcare providers and get involved.

“Setting an example for kids by being tobacco-free is another way to help prevent youth from starting,” said Katie Mulligan of Two Rivers Public Health Department. “If you use tobacco, it is never too late to quit.”

For Nebraskans over 18, looking for help quitting tobacco, call the Nebraska Tobacco Quitline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (784-8669). The Quitline is free and confidential, 24 hours a day and 7 days a week.

For more information call Two Rivers Public Health Department at (308) 995-4778 or visit [www.trphd.org](http://www.trphd.org). Or call the Buffalo County Tobacco Free Coalition at 308-237-5113 ext. 247 or visit <https://answersabouttobacco.com/>.

Follow TRPHD on Facebook and Twitter (@trpublichealth) and Buffalo County Tobacco Free Coalition on Facebook.

The Mission of Two Rivers Public Health Department is to assess and monitor the health status of the district and facilitate the linking of resources to assure health promotion, prevention, and protection for the people within Buffalo, Dawson, Franklin, Gosper, Harlan, Kearney, and Phelps Counties .

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