



# THE RAPIDES FOUNDATION

NEWS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Date:** Jan. 11, 2008  
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## **TOBACCO-COMPANY FOUNDER'S GRANDSON WARNS OF DANGERS OF TOBACCO**

The grandson of tobacco-company founder R.J. Reynolds was in Alexandria Jan. 9-10 to warn the public of the dangers of tobacco use.

Patrick Reynolds is one of the nation's top champions of a smoke-free society. After watching his father and brother die from cigarette-induced emphysema and lung cancer, Reynolds in 1986 decided to speak out against the industry his family helped build.

He delivered his powerful message as part of The Rapides Foundation's public kickoff of its new "Get Healthy Cenla" Initiative.

"We are honored to have Patrick Reynolds bring his unique perspective to Central Louisiana," said Joe Rosier, president and CEO of The Rapides Foundation. "He knows firsthand about the dangers of smoking and tobacco use, and he also knows the lengths that the tobacco industry has gone to keep people buying their product."

Patrick Reynolds' advocacy work, motivational talks to youth and appearances in the national press have made him a well-known and respected champion of a smoke-free society. He was the first tobacco industry figure to speak out against tobacco use. In 2003, former U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop called Reynolds "one of the nation's most influential advocates of a smoke-free America. His testimony is invaluable to our society."

Reynolds delivered "Tobacco Wars: The Battle for a Smoke Free America" during the Foundation's kickoff event for "Get Healthy Cenla." He also spoke to 1,200 Central Louisiana high school students at an invitation-only event on Jan. 10.

“Get Healthy Cenla” focuses on the important areas of tobacco, diet and physical activity. This event will introduce the Foundation’s multi-million dollar investment in tobacco prevention and control efforts. These efforts are intended to help Central Louisiana tobacco users kick the habit and prevent young people from ever starting. The diet and physical activity components will be introduced later.

Tobacco-related diseases are the number one preventable cause of death in the nation. In Central Louisiana, about one in four adults (24.0 percent) smokes, according to The Rapides Foundation’s Community Health Assessment. The national average is 22.2 percent.

One-half, or 50.9 percent, of Central Louisiana smokers tried to quit smoking at least once in the past year. Nationally, about 57.9 percent of smokers tried to quit.

The Rapides Foundation is a nonprofit philanthropic organization that provides grants to organizations in a nine-parish service area in Central Louisiana. Its mission is to improve the health status of Central Louisiana. For more information on the Foundation, visit [www.rapidesfoundation.org](http://www.rapidesfoundation.org). For more information on Get Healthy Cenla, visit [www.gethealthycenla.org](http://www.gethealthycenla.org).

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