



## RENFREW COUNTY AND DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT

### MEDIA RELEASE

**For Immediate Release: January 13, 2016**

#### **Renfrew County and District Health Unit Supports National Non-Smoking Week With ‘wouldrather’ Contest**

**National Non-Smoking Week (January 17 – 23, 2016)** Renfrew County and District Health Unit, in partnership with the provincial organization *Leave The Pack Behind*, is hosting the annual contest for young adults in Renfrew County and District. Aimed at motivating young adults to quit smoking, reduce their smoking, or just stay-smoke-free for a chance to win up to \$2,500 cash, the 6-week contest is an important strategy to help tackle the high rates of smoking among young adults 18-29 years old, (21% of Ontario young adults smoke compared to 13% of the general population).

Last year more than 13,000 young adults entered the **wouldrather....** contest which has been proven to be effective in helping people who smoke, to quit. Recent research shows that up to 20% of young adults who participate in **wouldrather...** will quit smoking. Without the contest, only about 5% would be successful. It helped Denis Mahoney, a student at Lakehead University and one of the \$2,500 winners in the 2015 contest, to finally quit.

“I started off casually, as most smokers do. I would smoke the occasional lunch hour and when I was drinking, but as time went on it became more and more routine. As soon as I realized I was hooked I wanted to quit, but it was a lot easier said than done. I had almost given up until I stumbled upon **wouldrather...** The first few days were the hardest, but after the first few weeks my “cold-like” symptoms were gone, and I’ve been 100% smoke-free now for almost 3 months. I wouldn’t have done it without **wouldrather...** and my friend Kalen who also quit and pushed me into participating. Now I’m positive I’ll be able to stay smoke-free.”

Because not everyone is ready to quit right now, **wouldrather...** offers contestants the opportunity to choose from one of four categories. Young adults who smoke can quit smoking all together (*Quit For Good*); cut their smoking in half (*Keep The Count*); or refrain from smoking any time they are socializing and drinking alcohol (*Party Without The Smoke*). Non-smokers and ex-smokers can also enter the contest by pledging to renew their decision to stay smoke-free (*Don’t Start and Win*). In **wouldrather....**, all contestants identify a ‘buddy’ who will support them during the contest, receive regular support emails tailored to their contest goal, and have the chance to win one of 8 cash prizes of up to \$2,500.

To participate in the 6-week contest beginning January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016, Ontario young adults between the ages of 18-29 or anyone enrolled at a publicly-funded post-secondary institution can sign up at [www.wouldrather.ca](http://www.wouldrather.ca) until January 24<sup>th</sup> at 11:59pm.

*Leave The Pack Behind* is an age-tailored tobacco control initiative offered year-round in Ontario. Funded by the Government of Ontario with generous prize support provided by the makers of Thrive and Habitrol, the **wouldrather...** contest aims to motivate and encourage young adult Ontarians to live tobacco-free lives.

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