

Health care providers, social service professionals, and other health advocates from the 7 county area of the Healthy Communities Partnership were invited to attend a free workshop, *Champions for Smokefree Pregnancies in Evansville*, on May 21 at the University of Southern Indiana.

The event was hosted by the Smokefree Communities Coalition and Healthy Communities Partnership Tobacco Free Initiative in, partnership with Promoting Smokefree Pregnancies in Indiana (PSPI).

The PSPI coalition, a statewide partner of the Indiana State Department of Health Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Commission, is comprised of agencies and individuals across Indiana dedicated to reducing the prevalence of smoking among women of childbearing age, particularly during pregnancy.

In Indiana, approximately 17% of pregnant women smoke, nearly twice the national average. In Vanderburgh County, over 22% of expectant mothers smoke.

Smoking during pregnancy is associated with a number of negative physical and mental outcomes including premature birth, low birth weight, asthma, and problems with learning and reading, among many others.

The May 21 event introduced participants to effective tools and techniques for providing tobacco cessation support to their patients and clients, with special emphasis on pregnant women. Participants heard experiences from local physician, Dr. Errin Weisman, on how she counsels patients to quit smoking. Information was given about the Indiana Tobacco Quitline and the 10 free coaching sessions they receive from their personal quit coaches when they call 1-800-QUIT-NOW.

“Tobacco cessation during pregnancy can be a sensitive and challenging task. We hope that hearing these champions’ success stories will inspire others who serve women and families to consider implementing some of the same simple practices”, said Martha Caine, Director for the Healthy Communities Partnership Tobacco Free Initiative.