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WVU tobacco researcher leads national group

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The Break Free Alliance Coordinating Council has unanimously elected a new chair: Robert H. Anderson, deputy director of the West Virginia University Prevention Research Center. Anderson, a member of the WVU Department of Community Medicine, will lead the group for two years.

"Robert Anderson has volunteered with the Alliance since its inception in 2001, leading our work to reduce tobacco-related health disparities among the incarcerated, homeless and other vulnerable populations," said Janet Porter, Break Free's program director. "His selection as the new chair underscores his strong leadership capabilities and commitment to this issue."

Anderson is scheduled to preside over the Break Free Alliance Expert Panel to Address Tobacco Use Among the Homeless Oct. 21 in Washington, D.C.

Break Free Alliance is one of six national networks funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Office on Smoking and Health.

"Break Free Alliance is a recognized leader in the nationwide effort to achieve health and social equity in tobacco control," said Rev. Larry Arce, vice chair of the Alliance and CEO of the Fresno Rescue Mission. "With Bob's experience and leadership, we will continue to move the agenda forward."

As chair, Anderson will direct the work of the Alliance through 2011, focusing on strengthening the network, expanding research and exploring global partnerships.

Last year Anderson partnered with researchers at the West Virginia Division of Tobacco Prevention in Charleston to identify the levels of nicotine and other chemicals in snus, a smokeless and spitless tobacco product marketed to young adults. The research uncovered that nicotine levels in Camel Snus were stronger than levels in several snuff products sold in the United States and that tobacco companies may be manipulating those levels.

Break Free Alliance is administered by the Health Education Council. The Coordinating Council consists of states, national organizations and regional agencies that oversee and drive the development and implementation of the Alliance's national initiatives.

For information about the WVU Department of Community Medicine see <http://www.hsc.wvu.edu/som/cmcd/>.

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