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## PRESS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release**

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### **Johnson County Public Health Congratulates the City of North English for Making Parks Tobacco/Nicotine Free**

Johnson County Public Health wishes to recognize the City of North English for its commitment to creating a healthier environment for all residents and visitors. The City Council voted to make all city owned or operated park grounds tobacco and nicotine free as of July 7, 2021. The ordinance states using any form of tobacco or electronic smoking devices in city-owned or operated park grounds is not allowed. Violators can be fined.

City Council members adopted this policy to protect the health of those community members who visit the parks to enjoy fresh air, play, relax, and exercise. Exposure to secondhand smoke, electronic cigarette aerosol, and tobacco product litter reduces the enjoyment of these spaces. Secondhand cigarette smoke harms everyone and there is no safe level or exposure to secondhand smoke, even in outdoor environments. Dan Strohmman, North English Mayor, explained, "Smoking kills 480,000 people each year in the U.S. Smoking can cause cancer, heart disease, diabetes, eye diseases, and COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease). So anytime we can promote smoke-free areas, it helps remind everyone of the dangers to all of us."

In Iowa, 5,100 adults die each year from their own smoking, and \$1.285 billion in annual healthcare costs in Iowa are directly caused by smoking. In addition, between 2016 and 2018, the rate of any tobacco use among 11th grade students in Iowa increased—rising from 14.7% to 24%. This increase was due to the unprecedented increase in e-cigarette use. Tobacco/nicotine-free policies provide the opportunity to change community norms around tobacco and vaping use and help to reduce youth tobacco and vaping use.

Johnson County Public Health will assist the City of North English in communicating about the new tobacco/nicotine-free policy to increase community awareness of the new policy and provide free signage. "We are pleased to add North English to the growing list of Iowa communities with tobacco/nicotine-free park policies," said Susan Vileta, Health Educator, Johnson County Public Health. Currently, 700 parks in Iowa prohibit tobacco use.

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