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**Improving Life, One  
Breath at a Time**

We bring people and resources  
together to fight tobacco use, bad  
air and the asthma epidemic.

**EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE - April 28, 2005****Contact:**

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Editor/Reporter Note: Interviews available with individuals affected by air quality.

**Every Four Days Someone Dies of Asthma in Washington.**

More than 500,000 people in Washington suffer from Asthma. On average, one day every week "Moderate" levels of air quality are making daily life harder for thousands of families.

**Seattle, WA** Today, the American Lung Association of Washington releases its annual *State of the Air in Washington* report for Clean Air Month in May. The *State of the Air* report describes air quality around the state, tells the story of people struggling daily with the burden of poor air quality, and shares how people can take action to reduce air pollution.

"No one should ever die from asthma," said Marina Cofer-Wildsmith, CEO, American Lung Association of Washington. "A child should never miss a ball game, a senior should never miss an outing because of their asthma. No one should struggle to find their breath. Asthma is a manageable disease," Cofer-Wildsmith added.

More densely populated regions of our state experience "Moderate" air quality on an average of about one day a week. The central Puget Sound region can have "Moderate" air quality an average of two days a week. Breathing "moderate" air quality can be a daily struggle for the hundreds of thousands of people with asthma and their families. Families like the ones featured in the *State of the Air* report, may have difficulty managing their health and carrying out normal household routines for life, work, school and play.

Asthma data has shown 100 people die in Washington State every year from asthma and the percentage of people with asthma is steadily increasing. Asthma is the leading cause of school absenteeism in Washington State. Cheryl Menard-Wentz of Toppenish knows. Her son Tony has been absent since February 7, 2001, when he died of an asthma attack. He was 11 years old.

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“Diesel fumes were a trigger for an asthma attack, so Tony could not ride the school bus,” Cheryl said. “In order for Tony to be allowed to participate in field trips, I drove Tony in our car. He missed out on the fun of being with his classmates,” she added.

Indoor and outdoor triggers such as secondhand smoke, air pollution from vehicle exhaust, woodsmoke, ozone or smog, as well as airborne molds, pollens, dust, animal dander, many household and industrial products can cause asthma or make asthma worse. An attack can leave a person gasping for breath as the airways become constricted, the passages inflamed and clogged with thick, sticky secretions.

The good news is communities are making progress to clear the air. Thousands of students are riding cleaner school buses thanks to Washington State Clean School Bus Program. Under the program, school buses are being retrofitted with emission-reducing equipment capable of emission reductions up to 90 percent.

In partnership with air quality agencies around the state, we have made progress in clearing the air we breathe, but it still contains toxic pollution from cars, trucks, ships, indoor and outdoor fires, even gasoline-powered yard equipment. Air pollution reduces lung function and growth in children. Children can experience asthma symptoms from air quality at levels once considered safe. Exposure to pollution can increase risk of hospitalization for asthma, damage the lungs and significantly increase the risk of premature death.

The American Lung Association of Washington provides daily air quality notification through its electronic Breathe Easy Network (BEN). People can also join Lung Action Network, an email-based legislative call to action system that alerts people of pending legislative action concerning air quality, asthma, secondhand smoke and other lung health issues. To subscribe to BEN or Lung Action Network, or to receive a copy of the *State of the Air in Washington* go to [www.alaw.org](http://www.alaw.org).

In other related news, a new bill is waiting to be signed into law by the governor. The Attack on Asthma bill, made possible by the American Lung Association of Washington, Washington Asthma Initiative and other organizations, will require a uniform asthma policy for school districts regarding the training and education of school staff and, will authorize students to self-carry and self-administer their own asthma medication.

*Founded in 1906 (to combat tuberculosis), the American Lung Association of Washington's mission is to assure lung health for the people of Washington. For more information on programs to fight tobacco use, bad air and the asthma epidemic, call 1-800-732-9339 or visit our website at [www.alaw.org](http://www.alaw.org).*

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