



Submitted photo

Some members of the RI Tobacco Control Network Steering Committee are pictured above, from left: Gertrude Jones—VP Community Services for Lifespan Corporate Services, Member, RITCN Steering Committee; Steven DeToy – Director of Public and Government Affairs, RI Medical Society, Member, RITCN Steering Committee; Howard Koh, MD—Assistant Secretary for Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Susan Roberts—Director, Government Relations and Advocacy, American Cancer Society, New England Division, Member, RITCN Steering Committee; Megan Tucker—Director of Government Relations, American Heart Association/American Stroke Association, Member, RITCN Steering Committee; Robert Crausman, MD—Chief Medical Officer, Landmark Medical Center, Chair of the RITCN Steering Committee; and Michael Fine, MD—newly appointed Interim Director, RI Department of Health.

Officials meet to support smokers

PROVIDENCE — On Tuesday, March 1st, more than one hundred local, state, and national leaders gathered at the Rhode Island Convention Center for a statewide summit to identify strategies to reduce smoking in Rhode Island by providing smokers with the tools and support they need to quit smoking. In many ways the summit was a collective call to action to help smokers quit. Elected officials, local advocates, state and federal health officials, health insurers and community leaders challenged one another to do more to improve every smoker's chance to succeed with cessa-

tion. Dr. Howard Koh, Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services for the Obama Administration, gave the keynote address, urging attendees to create an integrated system of outreach, care, and treatment that will one day provide all Rhode Island smokers with the resources they need to quit whenever they are ready and for as many times as it may take to remain permanently smoke-free.

Other speakers included Lt. Gov. Elizabeth Roberts, State Representative Eileen Naughton, Seema Dixit, Manager, Tobacco Control Program, RI Dept of Health,

Elena Nicolella, Medicaid Office, RI Dept. of Human Services, Dr. Mack Johnston, Chief Medical Officer, Neighborhood Health Plan of RI, and Christopher Koller, RI Health Insurance Commissioner.

A robust panel discussion and working sessions helped to prioritize a list of goals for Rhode Island:

1. Promoting the availability of high quality treatment options through a centralized hub;
2. Creating a system of regular monitoring and publicly reporting on utilization rates; and
3. Committing to an

ongoing public-private collaboration to eliminate barriers to effective care and gaps in coverage and to ensure adherence to cessation best practices.

The summit was organized by the Rhode Island Tobacco Control Network (www.RITCN.org), and co-sponsors included the American Lung Association in RI, the American Heart Association, the American Cancer Society, and the RI Department of Health. Funding was provided by the national Partnership for Prevention as part of its grant to a New England Cessation Policy Collaborative.