PLYMOUTH - Jordan Hospital will host Patrick Reynolds, a nationally-known tobacco opponent and the grandson of tobacco company founder R.J. Reynolds, for three community outreach lectures on "The Truth about Tobacco: Its Impact on Society and Children." Reynolds will be joined by Jordan Hospital's Cancer Program medical director, Francis J. Pleskot.

The first two lectures will be held for 2,500 Plymouth Public School students and teachers. The third lecture, to be held from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 30, at Plimoth Plantation on Warren Avenue, is free and open to the public.

On the South Shore and Cape Cod, lung cancer related to smoking and tobacco use is leading the cause of cancer death. Based on data from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, there were approximately 2,000 cases of lung cancer in Plymouth County in 2009. Nationally, there are more than 400,000 smoking-related deaths each year in the United States.

Despite all the warnings, smoking remains the number one cause of preventable death in the United States. Cigarettes cause more deaths than cocaine, auto accidents, AIDS, alcohol, heroin, fire, suicide and homicide combined.

The scariest part is that the tobacco trap has been set for children. Tobacco advertising has specifically targeted youth and has a powerful effect. Starting to smoke early makes it harder to stop and often leads to serious consequences, such as heart disease, emphysema and lung cancer.

"Sixty percent of smokers start by the age of 14, and 90 percent of smokers are firmly addicted before reaching age 19," Reynolds said. "Only one in 10 smokers starts smoking after age 19," he added. The costs to our society include over 400,000 lives lost every year in the U.S., more than 1,200 each day, and $50 billion annually in lost productivity and increased health care costs. Worldwide, the toll exacted by tobacco use is two to three million deaths each year. Of the world's 1.2 billion smokers, the World Health Organization estimates that 500 million of them will die because of smoking. This means that 9 percent of people now alive will die from cigarettes.

During his public lecture, Reynolds will tell his personal story of losing his father to emphysema caused by smoking, and then crossing over to fight for the other side. He'll provide an update on where Massachusetts stands in the battle against smoking, and what most needs to be done now. Reynolds will discuss the grades Massachusetts received in its Report Card for Tobacco Control, issued annually by the American Lung Association: an A for its smoking law, an F for spending on tobacco prevention programs, a B for its tobacco tax ($2.51 per pack vs. a national average of $1.41), and a D for tobacco cessation coverage. He'll discuss tobacco advertising and the new FDA law requiring graphic warnings on the face of cigarette packages, and will close with his vision of the future and a tobacco-free society.
PLYMOUTH

Insider takes on tobacco

By Emily Sweeney
GLOBE STAFF

Jordan Hospital is bringing an unlikely guest to Plymouth to educate people about the dangers of smoking and tobacco use.

Patrick Reynolds, grandson of tobacco mogul R.J. Reynolds, is scheduled to speak to students at two Plymouth schools next week as well as give a free public lecture at Plimoth Plantation.

Jordan Hospital is hosting Reynolds as part of its community outreach and education efforts, lung cancer related to smoking and tobacco use being the leading cause of cancer deaths in this region.

November is also National Lung Cancer Awareness Month; earlier this month, the US government proposed making warnings against smoking larger and more graphic by including images on cigarette packaging labels. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health also just launched a new media campaign specifically targeting smokers in Southeastern Massachusetts, where the smoking rate is higher than the state average.

Reynolds, who lives in Los Angeles, has made a name for himself as an outspoken opponent of tobacco. He's the executive director of the Foundation for a Smokefree America, an organization he founded in 1989.

After witnessing his relatives suffer from the effects of smoking, Reynolds kicked his pack-a-day habit and began a passionate crusade against tobacco. He divested his stock in the company founded by his grandfather, R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co., the second-largest tobacco company in the United States, producing popular brands of cigarettes, including Camel, Kool, and Winston.

Plymouth Superintendent Gary E. Maestas said he is looking forward to having Reynolds speak to 2,400 students next Tuesday and Wednesday, when he'll address assemblies at Plymouth South Middle School and the Plymouth Community Intermediate School.

"We're very fortunate to be working with Jordan Hospital to get him to speak to our middle school students. He really enjoys the opportunity to share his story," said Maestas. "It's really a remarkable message that he has. It's a message that kids need to hear."

Reynolds will tell the story of his father's death from emphysema caused by smoking; he was 15 when his father died. He will also talk about the addictiveness of tobacco, and show images that illustrate how the cigarette industry has targeted youth through advertising.

Reynolds presents some sobering statistics: 60 percent of smokers start by the age of 14; 90 percent of smokers are firmly addicted before reaching age 19; only one in 10 smokers starts smoking after age 19.

"At the middle school level, they haven't made the choice yet of whether they'll smoke or not smoke," said Reynolds, in a telephone interview. "If we can get them, if I can inform them, before their high school years, then they are more empowered to resist the onslaught of peer pressure and tobacco advertising."

At Plimoth Plantation on Wednesday, he will present a lecture, "The Truth About Tobacco — Its Impact on Society and Children." Francis J. Podbielski, medical director of Jordan Hospital's lung cancer program, will provide an overview about the program and introduce Reynolds.

Lung cancer "is the number one cancer killer," said Podbielski. "Lung cancer by far and away kills more people than breast or prostate cancer does. . . . I think the talk will be quite timely to what's going on."

The lecture is free and open to the public, and Reynolds encourages anyone who's trying to quit smoking to attend.

The American Cancer Society estimates there were 219,440 new cases of bronchus and lung cancer in the United States in 2009, 5,120 of them in Massachusetts.

The Department of Public Health's Tobacco Cessation and Prevention Program recently announced a campaign that specifically aimed at the South Coast region of Massachusetts, where the smoking rate is more than 80 percent higher than the statewide average of 15 percent.

During his talk at the plantation, Reynolds will discuss the latest grades Massachusetts received from the American Lung Association. Every year, the organization issues Tobacco Control Report Cards for each state. In 2009, Massachusetts got an A for its smoke-free air; an F for spending on tobacco prevention programs, a B for its tobacco tax ($2.51 per pack, vs. the national average of $1.41), and a C for health insurance coverage of tobacco cessation programs. Reynolds will also discuss the new FDA law requiring graphic warnings on cigarette packages.

The lecture on Wednesday is from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at Plimoth Plantation, 137 Warren Ave. Registration is required by calling 800-256-7326.

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NO SMOKE OR MIRRORS

If tobacco use is an issue in your household, consider driving over the bridge to hear "The Truth About Tobacco," a talk by Patrick Reynolds, grandson of the founder of R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. and executive director of the Foundation for a Smoke-Free America. The talk is sponsored by Jordan Hospital and will held 6-7:30 p.m. Tuesday at Plimoth Plantation, 137 Warren Ave., Plymouth.
Reynolds’ rap

By Rich Hartlen
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PLYMOUTH - Local smokers will have noticed a little extra pressure to kick the habit this week. They can thank a member of one of the world’s largest tobacco families for the well-intentioned nudge.

Patrick Reynolds, whose grandfather, R.J. Reynolds, started making cigarettes in the 1800s, visited town last week to deliver a stronger anti-smoking message.

“I want my family to be on the right side for a change,” Reynolds told students at Plymouth South Middle School Wednesday morning.

Reynolds, a former pack-a-day smoker, saw his father and oldest brother die from cigarette-induced illnesses. He directed his tobacco company stock, quit smoking and started setting the record straight in the 1980s.

The founder of the Foundation for a Smokefree America, Reynolds spent two days in Plymouth last week, giving presentations to students at both middle schools during the day and a seminar for adults at Plymouth Plantation at night.

Jordan Hospital sponsored the talks as an extension of the Cancer Center’s community outreach programming.

“Long cancer related to smoking and tobacco use is the leading cause of cancer death on the South Shore. As part of Jordan Hospital’s mission to provide high-quality health and wellness lectures for the community, we hosted Mr. Reynolds to help raise community awareness about the dangers of tobacco use and lung cancer,” Christopher Smalley, marketing director of Jordan Hospital, said.

A veteran of the talk circuit, Reynolds quickly established a bond with middle schoolers, explaining, with the help of old family photos, how he became estranged from his father, R.J. Reynolds Jr., after his parents separated during his early childhood.

When he finally reconnected with his father several years later, the head of the tobacco company was sickly, haggard and tired, already dying from smoke-related disease.

That’s when Patrick Reynolds decided that people needed to know the truth about cigarettes and tobacco.

Reynolds told students his grandfather did not know that cigarettes could kill people when he started manufacturing Camels and Winston. But over time the link became clear, and the tobacco industry began to work toward getting people hooked at an early age.

With 1,200 a day smokers dying in the United States alone, the tobacco companies targeted the young, luring smokers with cartoon images and hype.

“Not everyone is one your side,” Reynolds said. “There are some bad people out there who want to get you addicted. They don’t care about you.”

An informal poll at the middle-school session revealed good cause for Reynolds’ concerns.

Many students raised their hands when asked if their parents smoked. Many of those acknowledged their parents smoke in the confines of the house and car, exposing their children to the dangers of second-hand smoke. A sizable number of hands remained lifted when Reynolds asked students if they knew classmates who smoked.

Reynolds shocked students with the story of a popular 17-year-old track star from Oklahoma whose use of chew tobacco cost him his tongue, his looks and ultimately his life.

Photographs of the once handsome boy after disfiguring surgeries drove home a powerful reality of what smoking and tobacco can do to people.

Reynolds implored students not to get hooked in the first place and to seek help if they already are.

“People who succeed get help, from a counselor, a trusted teacher, nurse, parents and friends,” Reynolds said.

“And for those who raised their hands to identify smokers in their families, Reynolds offered a formula for help children appeal to their parents to quit. It starts with a compliment and moves to, ‘Talk from the heart, and you will be heard,’ Reynolds said.

“We will have a tobacco-free society because of you, because you are the future,” Reynolds said.