CHICAGO, July 23, 2014 — Oral Health America (OHA) is proud to announce the winner of the 13th Annual NSTEP® (National Spit Tobacco Education Program) Slogan Contest. Twelve-year-old, Falls Church, Va.-native Alex Smith’s slogan, "Play with grit, strive to hit, but never spit!" will be featured throughout the upcoming Little League Baseball® World Series, reaching tens of thousands of young baseball and softball players and their families and bringing more attention to the dangerous habit of chewing tobacco.

Teaming up with Little League® Baseball and Softball, the annual contest calls on players ages 8-14 to create a compelling ten-word phrase describing the dangers of spit tobacco for a chance to win a trip to the Little League Baseball World Series and cash prize.

"It’s an awesome program, and I told him that the most important thing is that maybe you’ll convince someone not to start,” said Alex’s mother, Beth Smith. “That’s the whole key—if you don’t start, then you don’t have to quit.”

The recent tragic loss of Tony Gwynn to oral cancer highlights the fact that educating Americans about the dangers of spit tobacco is more important than ever. The latest numbers from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show that while cigarette use continues to decline, spit tobacco use among adults remains the same. In addition, almost half of all new users start before the age 18, with 8.8% of all high school students using smokeless tobacco as of 2013. Through the slogan contest and other advocacy and education efforts throughout the year, NSTEP works to educate people, especially young people, about spit tobacco and helps all users quit.

“NSTEP provides Little League athletes with an opportunity to start a dialogue about an alarming trend in tobacco use on and off the field,” said Beth Truett, President and CEO of Oral Health America. “We are thrilled about the enthusiasm of youth engaging their peers with an important message about the dangers of smokeless tobacco.”

As the winner of the slogan contest, Alex will receive an all-expense paid trip to the Little League Baseball World Series® in South Williamsport, Pa., and a cash prize. In addition, OHA will donate $500 to Alex’s local Little League program, the Falls Church Kiwanis Little League.

“Little League is pleased to be a part of helping educate Little League players about the risks associated with the use of spit tobacco,” said Stephen D. Keener, Little League President and CEO. “We hope that by participating in the slogan contest we help increase awareness for Little League players, coaches, and their parents. We thank Oral Health America and commend them on NSTEP’s efforts.”

The winning slogan was chosen out of nearly 1,500 submissions from Little Leaguers® from across the country, a contest record.

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ABOUT ORAL HEALTH AMERICA
OHA’s mission is to change lives by connecting communities with resources to increase access to oral health care, education and advocacy for all Americans, especially those most vulnerable. Through Smiles Across America®, which serves 400,000 children annually, the Wisdom Tooth Project™, which reaches tens of thousands of older adults, and the Campaign for Oral Health Equity, which prioritizes oral health alongside other chronic diseases, OHA provides needed oral health care and education, helping Americans of all ages to have a healthy mouth and understand the importance of oral health for overall health. For more information about Oral Health America, please visit www.oralhealthamerica.org.

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ABOUT LITTLE LEAGUE BASEBALL AND SOFTBALL
Little League® Baseball and Softball is the world’s largest organized youth sports program, with 2.4 million players and one million adult volunteers in every U.S. state and more than 80 other countries. In 2014, Little League is celebrating its 75th Anniversary of developing major league people. Celebrate Little League’s 75th Anniversary online at LittleLeagueBigLegacy.com, official hashtag: #LittleLeague75. Follow all of the action from the nine Little League World Series at llbws.org or on Facebook and Twitter at hashtag: #LLWS.

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