

NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release

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Step Up for the Great American Smokeout

The Panhandle Prevention Coalition and Panhandle Public Health District encourage smokers to join others and set November 21 as your tobacco quit date and get ready to experience clean air, fresh breath, and improved health. The Great American Smokeout encourages smokers to make a plan to quit. By doing so, smokers will be taking an important step towards a healthier life – one that can lead to reduced cancer risks.

Whether or not you smoke, this is a good month to take control of your health! PPHD will share daily tips to help you. Follow Panhandle Public Health District on facebook.

"Don't be discouraged if you have tried before," said Tabi Prochazka, Tobacco Free in the Panhandle coordinator. "It takes the average person seven attempts at quitting before they succeed." Most American adults who smoke wish they could quit, and more than half have tried within the past year, according to a report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

A mere 20 minutes after a smoker quits, their heart rate drops and only a year after, the risk of heart disease is half that of a current smoker. Ten years after maintaining a smoke-free life, the risk of lung and other cancers decreases and by 15 years, the risk of heart disease is that of a non-smoker.

"Quitting is hard, but you can increase your chances of success with help," Prochazka said. "Nebraska has a number of excellent resources to help people quit including the free and confidential Nebraska Tobacco Quitline at 800-QUIT-NOW, and companion website QuitNow.ne.gov."

According to the 2010 Surgeon General's Report there is no safe level of exposure to tobacco smoke and secondhand smoke is a proven cause of lung cancer, heart disease, serious respiratory illnesses, low birth weight and sudden infant death syndrome. Only smoke-free air laws provide effective protection from secondhand smoke. "While the Nebraska Clean Indoor Air Act protects workers, there is still work to be done to protect against the dangers of secondhand smoke exposure. Adopting policies at multi-unit housing and 15-foot door restrictions at businesses have been deemed extremely beneficial towards reducing exposure," stated Prochazka.

For a listing of smoke free homes in the Panhandle visit <http://www.pphd.org/tfnHousingAptList.html>.

Prochazka is available to assist multi-unit housing and businesses to adopt policies by contacting 308-487-3600 Ext. 107. For additional information about the Great American Smokeout visit <http://www.cancer.org/healthy/stayawayfromtobacco/greatamericansmokeout/index>. Funding for Tobacco Free in the Panhandle is provided by the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services/Tobacco Free Nebraska Program as a result of the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement.