

NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release.

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Quit together. Win together. Join millions of Americans and begin to live tobacco free.

Life is short, and for those who smoke, quitting returns precious years and vitality. The Panhandle Prevention Coalition and Panhandle Public Health District encourage smokers to join others and make a plan to quit for the Great American Smokeout on November 20. Set the 20th as your tobacco quit date and get ready to experience clean air, fresh breath, and improved health. By quitting - even for one day - smokers will be taking an important step towards a healthier life – one that can lead to reducing cancer risks.

Tobacco use remains the single largest preventable cause of disease and premature death in the US, yet over 10,000 Panhandle residents still smoke cigarettes. As of 2010, 19.2% of males in the Panhandle use smokeless tobacco — another dangerous and addictive form of tobacco.

"Quitting isn't easy, but you can do it! 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.

A mere 20 minutes after a smoker quits, their heart rate and blood pressure drop and only a year after, the risk of heart disease is half that of a continuing smoker's. Ten years after maintaining a smoke-free life, the risk of lung and other cancers decreases. After 15 years, the risk of heart disease is that of a non-smoker.

"Quitting is hard, but research shows that smokers who have support are more likely to quit for good," 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. 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 for multi-unit housing and tobacco-free businesses have been deemed extremely beneficial towards reducing exposure," stated Prochazka.

For assistance in adopting a policy contact Prochazka at tprochazka@pphd.org or 308-487-3600 ext. 107.

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.

For additional information visit www.pphd.org/tfn.html or call Tabi Prochazka, Tobacco Free in the Panhandle Coordinator, at Panhandle Public Health District at 308-487-3600 ext 107 or toll free at 866-701-7173. Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety and quality of life for all who

live, learn, work and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle Community.