



STATE OF OKLAHOMA

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Tobacco Helpline Available for “Great American Smokeout”

OKLAHOMA CITY – For the first time in Oklahoma, smokers calling it quits for the Great American Smokeout will have the opportunity to receive free professional cessation counseling through a toll-free Helpline, 1-866-PITCH ‘EM (1-866-748-2436). The Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline, launched in August of this year, is funded by the Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust.

Each year since 1977, the American Cancer Society has sponsored the Great American Smokeout on the third Thursday of November to help smokers quit cigarettes for at least one day, in hopes they will quit forever.

Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline services are free of charge and provide assistance to tobacco users, and to health care professionals who may want specific information on medications and services to help their patients quit. All callers receive information and materials, or “quit kits” that address their specific concerns and some may be referred to a local cessation program.

Callers interested in quitting can enroll in the Helpline’s intensive telephone-based program that consists of a series of five counseling calls with the same professional specialist over a three to four month period. The timing of the calls is based upon the caller’s quit date and availability. Tobacco Cessation Specialists work with each caller to determine their readiness to quit and assist them in developing a quit plan that is tailored to their individual needs. Specialists also help callers identify and access benefits that may be available to them through their employer, Medicaid, or other insurance provider to cover the cost of cessation medications, such as nicotine patches, gum, or Zyban.

Tracey Strader, executive director of the Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust, said that “the Helpline has been even more popular than originally expected. Although most Oklahoma smokers want to quit, many are just needing a little help.”

The Helpline’s “live” hours of operation are 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. Monday through Thursday, from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Fridays and from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. on weekends. Helpline staff will return any messages left after hours. For more information on the Helpline please see:

<http://www.tobaccosettlement.state.ok.us/programs/helpline.html> .

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