



## STATE OF OKLAHOMA

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### **New Services Available for “Great American Smokeout”**

**OKLAHOMA CITY** – Smokers calling it quits for the Great American Smokeout this year will have the help they need to quit for good. Through the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline, 1-866-PITCH ‘EM (1-866-748-2436), professional tobacco cessation counseling is available at no charge to all Oklahomans with a desire to stop smoking or using other tobacco products. And for the first time in Oklahoma, participants in the Helpline’s counseling program who are on Medicare or totally uninsured will also have the opportunity to receive free nicotine patches or nicotine gum.

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. The Great American Smokeout for 2004 will be Thursday, November 18.

Funded entirely from the investment earnings of the Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust, Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline services are free of charge and provide assistance to tobacco users, and to health care professionals who may want specific information to help their patients quit.

All callers interested in quitting can enroll in the Helpline’s intensive telephone-based program consisting of a series of five cessation 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. All callers receive information and materials, or “quit kits” that address their specific concerns and some may be referred to a local cessation program.

As a new service offered for the first time this year, the Helpline is now able to offer nicotine replacement products on a limited basis and free of charge to those who are on Medicare or those who are totally uninsured when they participate in the Helpline’s counseling program. Other callers are assisted by Specialists to identify and access benefits that may be available to them through their employer, Medicaid, or other insurance to cover the cost of nicotine replacement products and other cessation medications.

“Researchers have found that by taking advantage of both professional cessation counseling and cessation products such as nicotine patches and gum, tobacco users stand the best chance of quitting for good,” said Tracey Strader, executive director of the Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust. “Although the investment earnings from the Endowment are still small compared to the tremendous needs for tobacco cessation assistance, we are very pleased to be able to offer this new service through the Helpline for those most in need.”

The Helpline’s “live” hours of operation are 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. seven days a week. Helpline staff will return any messages left after hours. For more information please see:

[www.tobaccosettlement.state.ok.us/programs/helpline.html](http://www.tobaccosettlement.state.ok.us/programs/helpline.html).

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