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Tobacco-Free Oklahoma Week Rallies Support for a Healthier Oklahoma

Benefits of adopting 100% tobacco-free properties promoted statewide

Oklahoma City - Governor Brad Henry has proclaimed November 14 through 21 as "Tobacco-Free Oklahoma Week" to promote tobacco-free property policies that protect Oklahoma workers and the public from secondhand smoke, model healthy behaviors for our youth, and help support tobacco users who are trying to quit.

In Oklahoma, tobacco is responsible for more than 6,000 deaths each year. An additional 120,000 Oklahomans suffer from cancer, heart disease and other chronic diseases caused by tobacco use or secondhand smoke. The majority of those in Oklahoma who use tobacco are trying to quit.

Tobacco's toll on Oklahoma's youth is staggering. Each year 4,700 Oklahoma kids become new daily smokers, and 216,000 of our youth are exposed to secondhand smoke at home. Tragically, 87,000 Oklahoma kids who are now under 18 will ultimately die prematurely from smoking.

"Tobacco-Free Oklahoma Week is an opportunity to unite Oklahomans against the leading cause of preventable illness, disability and premature death in Oklahoma," said Tracey Strader, executive director of the Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust (TSET). "By adopting tobacco-free lifestyles, supporting tobacco-free environments and taking advantage of services like the free Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline (1-800-QUIT-NOW), we can make dramatic improvements in the health of all Oklahomans."

Tobacco use costs Oklahomans more than \$2.7 billion in medical expenses and lost productivity each year. "By adopting 100 percent tobacco-free property policies and providing cessation assistance to employees, businesses can improve their bottom line," said State Health Commissioner Dr. Terry Cline. "It's much less expensive for employers to help prevent serious illnesses among their workers than to pay for medical treatment and lost productivity."

The proclamation notes that the Oklahoma Certified Healthy Business Program – cosponsored by the Oklahoma Academy for State Goals, the Oklahoma Turning Point Council, the State Chamber of Commerce, and the State Department of Health – requires that all companies/workplaces seeking to

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achieve the highest level of certification must have a 100% tobacco-free policy for the entire property under their control.

During Tobacco-Free Oklahoma Week, residents are encouraged to show support for a healthier state by sharing their tobacco-free stories at www.StopsWithMe.com. Those entering may be eligible to win a pair of tickets to the OU vs. OSU football game on November 28.

To learn more about Oklahoma Tobacco-Free Week and view the Governor's proclamation visit www.StopsWithMe.com

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Sidebar Information:

Smokers and Non-Smokers

Make your homes and cars tobacco-free

Refuse tobacco industry sponsorship of events and refuse tobacco industry-sponsored materials or magazines in your offices or classrooms

Use or tell your loved ones about the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline at 1-800-QUIT NOW

Encourage your elected officials to support strong public policy that will protect the public and workers from secondhand smoke, and prevent initiation of tobacco use

Join a coalition and make a difference in your community

Business Owners and Managers

Become an Oklahoma Certified Healthy Business

Establish a tobacco-free property policy for your business, indoors and outdoors

Offer smoking cessation to your employees through insurance coverage or wellness programs

Promote the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline 1-800-QUIT-NOW

Sponsor a local coalition's activities or events

Attached Graphics:

- *Oklahoma Tobacco-Free Week*



- *Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline*

