



STATE OF OKLAHOMA

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Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline Serves Callers Statewide *Rush Expected for Great American Smokeout*

OKLAHOMA CITY – The Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust reported today that calls to the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline have been received from almost every county in the state and that many calls are expected for the Great American Smokeout being held tomorrow. The toll-free Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline, 1-800-QUIT NOW (1-800-784-8669), is a professional, telephone-based tobacco cessation counseling service provided at no charge to Oklahomans who want to quit using tobacco.

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 2005 Great American Smokeout will be Thursday, November 17.

Following are facts on the use of the Helpline during the fiscal year ending June 30, 2005:

- 12,367 Oklahoma tobacco users registered for Helpline services. In addition, 147 health care providers and 310 family or friends of tobacco users received information to assist their patients and loved ones.
- Registrants called from 76 of Oklahoma's 77 counties (only Cimarron county was not represented) and from 30 of 39 federally-recognized Native American tribes in Oklahoma.
- Health care providers sent in 404 "fax referrals" to the Helpline, including 66 for pregnant patients.
- Nearly twice as many females (66%) as males (32%) registered for Helpline services.
- About 2% (235) of the registrants were pregnant or breast-feeding mothers.
- 53% of registrants had no health insurance.
- 92% of Helpline participants would recommend the Helpline to others.

"We're extremely pleased to see how quickly news is spreading about the free services offered by the Helpline," said Tracey Strader, executive director of the Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust. "It can be hard to quit, but at least there's real help on the other end of the line whenever you're ready."

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The Helpline provides free, personalized assistance by professional cessation specialists. Callers enrolled in the Helpline's "Free & Clear" program work with the same "quit coach" throughout the quitting process. During a series of up to five telephone sessions, the specialists assist callers in developing and working through a quit plan based on their individual needs.

Participants in the Free & Clear program who are on Medicare or totally uninsured may also be eligible for free nicotine patches or nicotine gum. Other callers are assisted to identify and access benefits that may be available through their employer, Medicaid, or other insurance to cover the cost of patches, gum, or other cessation aids. Research shows that using a combination of professional assistance and cessation aids is the most effective way to quit.

The Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline's hours of operation are 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. seven days a week, and staff will return any messages left after hours. For more information about the Helpline, please see: <http://www.tset.ok.gov/programs/helpline.html>.

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