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New Restaurant Smoking Room Rebate Program Launched Today

The Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) today launched the “Restaurant Smoking Room Rebate Program” in a novel effort to boost both the health of Oklahomans and the bottom line of participating restaurants across the state.

The program was created as a result of the Clean Air in Restaurants Act passed by the Oklahoma Legislature in 2010. To reduce exposure of customers and employees to secondhand tobacco smoke pollution, the act authorizes the OSDH to provide a rebate incentive to encourage those restaurant owners who previously constructed smoking rooms in compliance with state law to now convert their restaurants to be completely smokefree. Studies show even brief exposures to secondhand smoke, less than the time spent by diners in restaurant smoking rooms, can be harmful to health.

“We are pleased to offer this rebate program because we recognize many restaurant owners wanted to do the right thing to improve the health of their employees and customers, but needed assistance in making the conversion to be completely smokefree,” said State Health Commissioner Dr. Terry Cline. “It’s a win-win for everyone and a tremendous boost in helping improve the health of all Oklahomans.”

Restaurant owners who take advantage of the rebate program can apply for a rebate of 50 percent of the capitalized expenditures for certain smoking room construction costs, minus any depreciation taken from the expenditures. To be eligible for a rebate, the smoking room must have been constructed after June 6, 2003, and before Nov. 1, 2010. Additionally, the restaurant must be smokefree prior to the time of receiving the rebate, but no later than Jan. 1, 2013.

Applications and information packets for this limited-time program are now available at www.breatheeasyok.com under the “Smokefree Restaurants” tab or by visiting www.health.ok.gov. Further information is also available by calling the OSDH at (405) 271-3619, or 1-800-522-0203, emailing TUPS@health.ok.gov, or by sending inquiries to: Restaurant Smoking Room Rebate Program, Attention: TUPS, Oklahoma State Department of Health, 1000 Northeast Tenth Street, Oklahoma City, OK 73117-1207.

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