

World No Tobacco Day slated for Saturday

What would a tobacco-free day look like?

The Carter County Turning Point Tobacco Coalition, along with the Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust and the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline, would like to find out. That's why they are encouraging tobacco users on Saturday to go tobacco free during World No Tobacco Day.

World No Tobacco Day is an annual day of awareness sponsored by the World Health Organization that highlights the health risks associated with tobacco use in order to end the tobacco epidemic for good.

Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of death in the United States, and has more than 16 million Americans suffering from a disease caused by smoking. In Oklahoma, smoking alone kills more than 6,200 adults annually, leaves tens of thousands of Oklahoma adult smokers suffering from associated diseases and adversely affects the health of thousands of nonsmokers, including children and those with asthma and heart disease.

"Tobacco kills more people than drugs, alcohol, AIDS, car crashes, homicides and suicides combined," says Sister Carolyn Stoutz, tobacco coalition chairperson. "But it isn't just about the numbers of loved ones we've lost. It is also about illnesses, disability and reduced quality of life due to smoking. It is about missing a daughter's wedding, a grandchild's first steps or even your own wedding anniversary. World No Tobacco Day provides an opportunity to take back those special moments by setting a quit date on May 31 and quitting for life. The tobacco coalition in Carter County, as well as other coalitions across the state, works to inform the public of the dangerous effects of tobacco use and to expose the deceptive practices of the tobacco industry which has historically targeted youth, minorities, and women in marketing."

A world with no tobacco would mean millions of lives saved. According to the CDC, reducing smoking prevalence worldwide by 20 to 25 percent could prevent 100 million premature deaths by 2020. If the current trends of smoking continue, approximately 8 million people worldwide will die each year from tobacco use by 2030.

In order to make every day World No Tobacco Day, the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline offers free assistance and support for all Oklahomans. Since 2003, the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline has helped more than 250,000 Oklahomans quit using tobacco. The helpline offers free services including quit coaching, a customized plan to help quit, online support and a free starter kit of patches, gum or lozenges.

To contact Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline for support, call (800) 784-8669 or visit www.OKhelpline.com. Carter County Turning Point meets the second Thursday of each month at lunch time at the health department. The tobacco coalition meets every other month in Ardmore and monthly in Healdton at the hospital's community room. The next meeting in Healdton is noon today, and in Ardmore at 9 a.m. July 11 at the Children's Shelter. For more information, call (580) 226-1838.

The Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline is primarily funded by the Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust, in partnership with the Oklahoma State Department of Health, Oklahoma Health Care Authority, Oklahoma Employees Group Insurance Division, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The helpline has a 34 percent quit rate for callers who receive multiple coaching calls, while tobacco users who quit cold turkey have a 5 percent success rate.