

Locals urged to celebrate World No Tobacco Day by going tobacco-free

The Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust, the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline and Cherokee County Communities of Excellence Tobacco Control Coalition are encouraging tobacco users to go tobacco free during World No Tobacco Day on Saturday, May 31.

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,” said Sarah Johnson, Cherokee County Communities of Excellence Tobacco Control Coalition member. “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.”

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, about eight million people worldwide will die each year from tobacco use by 2030.

To make every day World No Tobacco Day, the Tobacco Helpline offers free quit coaching 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 the Helpline, call 800-784-8669.

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.