

### **Coalition asks kids to kick butts**

Statistics show that 1,200 Americans die every day from health problems caused by the use of tobacco and secondhand smoke.

On April 2, youth and adults nationwide will join together to raise awareness of the harmful effects of tobacco use through The Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids' Kick Butts Day. Thousands of events are scheduled throughout the country, including several here in Payne County.

Oklahoma State University is holding Project 1200, during which 1,200 pairs of shoes will be on display from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., and Provost Marlene Strathe will read an official proclamation at 11:30 a.m.

"Shoes have been used for this project, as in many places, when someone dies, there is a saying: that person hangs his/her shoes," said Yvon Fils-Aime, OSU tobacco educator. "It seems that many people can easily associate shoes with death."

Those who come to view the shoes will also have an opportunity to use a message board to include a story, quote or fact about how tobacco has personally affected them. Commercials that highlight the adverse health consequences of tobacco will also be played.

"We call this 'Project 1200,' and we want it to attract some attention and perhaps wake some people up about the dangers of tobacco use," said Robin Purdie, director of the OSU Seretean Wellness Center. "At the same time, we hope it will foster more understanding as to why Oklahoma State University has decided to become a tobacco free zone as of July 1."

Each of the 1,200 pairs of shoes will be donated to charity following the day-long event.

Other action on Wednesday includes educational booths on display at Stillwater Public Library and Stillwater Medical Center from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and Meridian Technology Center from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Payne County Breathe Easy Coalition members will be at booths to answer questions and also to provide information on tobacco use.

"Oklahoma will never be able to improve their health scores relative to the rest of the nation (we are presently at the bottom), if we don't improve our health habits and health behaviors," said Jerry Moeller, CEO of Stillwater Medical Center, in a press release.

"We are in the middle of the pack in the nation as far as access to health care, but at the bottom for outcomes. Why? Because of our poor health habits, with smoking being the number one most destructive of our behaviors."

Also, booths will be at the Perkins Family Clinic, Perkins Public Library, Cushing Regional Hospital and Yale High School.

In Oklahoma, tobacco is the leading cause of preventable death, killing more Oklahomans each year than alcohol, auto accidents, AIDS, suicides, murders and illegal drugs combined. Those needing assistance to kick the habit can call the 1-800-QUIT-NOW hotline.