

PATCH encourages tobacco-free state

The Pottawatomie Alliance Toward Community Health (PATCH) began hosting a series of activities Nov. 14, which will continue through Nov. 21 to celebrate “Tobacco-Free Oklahoma Week” and promote protections for Oklahomans from secondhand smoke, model healthy behaviors for our youth, and help support tobacco users who are trying to quit.

Oklahoma Gov. Brad Henry proclaimed Nov. 14 through Nov. 21 as “Tobacco-Free Oklahoma Week” across the state to raise awareness about tobacco-related issues.

In Oklahoma, tobacco is responsible for more than 6,000 deaths each year. An additional 120,000 Oklahomans suffer from cancer, heart disease and other chronic diseases caused by tobacco use or secondhand smoke.

The majority of those in Oklahoma who use tobacco are trying to quit. PATCH will focus on supporting Oklahoma smokers who want to quit as part of the Great American Smokeout on Nov. 19.

“Tobacco use causes so many health problems, from heart disease and cancer to emphysema and other respiratory issues,” Jennifer Birchett, PATCH chairperson, said.

“We have vigorously supported—and will continue to support—local initiatives in Pottawatomie County that will protect the public and our children and help those who want to quit using tobacco products.”

Each year, 4,700 Oklahoma kids become new daily smokers and 216,000 of our youth are exposed to secondhand smoke at home. About 87,000 Oklahoma kids who are now younger than 18 will ultimately die prematurely from smoking.

“Tobacco-Free Oklahoma Week is a great way to raise awareness about tobacco issues and celebrate those who have taken action to reduce the toll of tobacco,” Birchett said.

“Many of our mayors, city councils, business and civic leaders in Pottawatomie County have been working in partnership with PATCH on this important issue. We are excited to celebrate the success those partnerships have fostered and look forward to a tobacco-free future.”

The governor’s proclamation notes that the Oklahoma Certified Healthy Business Program—cosponsored by the Oklahoma Academy for State Goals, the Oklahoma Turning Point Council, the State Chamber of Commerce, and the State Department of Health—requires that all companies or workplaces seeking to achieve the highest level of certification must have a 100-percent tobacco-free policy for the entire property under their control.

During Tobacco-Free Oklahoma Week, Oklahomans from Pottawatomie County can show support for a healthier state by sharing their tobacco-free stories at www.StopsWithMe.com.

Those entering may be eligible to win a pair of tickets to the OU vs. OSU football game Nov. 28.