

Guymon DAILY HERALD

Next week is 'Tobacco-free Oklahoma' week

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By: Miranda Fleming

As tobacco listed is the leading cause of preventable death in Oklahoma, in cooperation with the Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust (TSET), Governor Mary Fallin officially proclaimed Jan. 29-Feb. 4, 2012 as "Tobacco-Free Oklahoma Week."

Oklahoma State Health Commissioner, Dr. Terry Cline stated, "From individuals, to communities, to our businesses, each of us has a role to play to prevent and reduce the use of tobacco. Ultimately, this will improve the lives and livelihoods of all Oklahomans."

As an extra encouragement and incentive for tobacco free week, Oklahomans are invited to tell how their lives have been impacted by tobacco through, "Share Your Story" at Thunder.nba.com, where participants will be entered into a contest to win four tickets to the Oklahoma City Thunder home game versus Memphis on Feb. 3.



Texas County Tobacco Control Coordinator, Kayla McCarter said, ""With so many Thunder fans in our area and around the state, this is a great incentive for promoting a tobacco free lifestyle and score some great tickets!"

As another Oklahoma child develops into a daily smoker ever 30 minutes statewide, promoting tobacco-free lifestyles is not only beneficial to the general public to lower the risks of cancer and chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease caused by exposure to secondhand smoke, but is beneficial to businesses as well.

Studies show medical costs and loss of productivity caused by smoking is annually costing Oklahoma more than \$2 billion. Businesses suffer as, on average, smokers are absent from work 50 percent more than non-smokers due to sickness, costing businesses an estimated \$4,430 per year in missed work days and unproductive work time.

"Reducing tobacco use and making a commitment to a healthier workforce must be a top priority for all Oklahomans if we are serious about continued economic growth for the state," said TSET Executive Director, Tracey Strader. "Existing and prospective employers closely examine health care costs when considering expansion and relocation. A healthy workforce can only sharpen our competitive edge and further economic development for the state."

Assistance is available for individuals and businesses ready to go tobacco free.

Businesses can access a free program at www.StopsWithMe.com on the community organizations page or www.strongandhealthy.ok.gov or www.okturningpoint.org

Tobacco free minded Oklahomans can access quitting tobacco support and a two-week starter supply of nicotine patches, lozenges or gum for free, through the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline (1-800-QUIT-NOW or Okhelpline.com) or live help through online quit smoking programs at Smokefree.gov or Women.Smokefree.gov or Teen.Smokefree.gov

"We know and other states have demonstrated that tobacco use can be reduced through effective policies and programs at local and state levels," Cline said. "However, until the law put in place in Oklahoma in the 1980's and 90's due to tobacco industry influence are repealed and local rights are returned to communities, Oklahoma's cities and towns will continue to be prohibited from passing local tobacco prevention ordinances that protect their citizens and help create a healthier workforce."

For more information on creating a tobacco free workplace/business locally, contact Kayla McCarter inside the Texas County Health Department, located at 1410 N. East St in Guymon or give her a call at 580-338-8544.