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By Tom Blakey

Transcript Staff Writer

Health Department offers smoking cessation classes

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Registration has begun for an eight-week series of Freedom From Smoking classes, for Cleveland County residents ready to quit the tobacco habit.

The classes are free of charge, and will be conducted from 6 to 8 p.m. on eight consecutive Tuesdays, from Feb. 6 to March 20, at the Cleveland County Health Department, 250 12th Ave. NE.

"The Cleveland County Health Department is excited to bring free smoking cessation classes to Cleveland County residents who are ready to get serious about kicking their tobacco habits," said Alexandria Hart-Smith, public health educator for the Cleveland and McClain County health departments.

Hart-Smith and Pat Murray will instruct the classes, with certification by the American Lung Association.

Freedom From Smoking is "a positive program that emphasizes the benefits of health, mastery of one's own life and other additional benefits," Hart-Smith said. "The individual and group activities will show tobacco users how to change their behavior."

The Freedom From Smoking program began in 1975, when the leaders of the American Lung Association, American Thoracic Society and Congress of Lung Association launched a project to develop a smoking cessation program.

Each organization offered a unique contribution -- the American Lung Association had the concerned and committed volunteers, ATS supplied scientific research and expertise and CLAS provided practical experience as health professionals, Hart-Smith said.

"The Freedom From Smoking Class is resource rich," she said. "We provide our group with the best possible information and supportive educational materials. We will assist people with the logical progression from awareness of their tobacco habit to actual behavior change. Everyone will go through the same stages at the same time."

In other programs, participants quit at different times or perhaps cut down but never actually target a quit date, she said.

The free classes are made possible by the collaborative efforts of the Cleveland County Health Department and Cleveland County Turning Point: Tobacco Free Cleveland County Coalition.

For more information about the program or to sign up, call Hart-Smith at 579-2251, or Murray at 579-2267. Seating is limited so call today, organizers said.