

Published March 22, 2008 12:00 am - For The Transcript

Members of Cleveland County Turning Point/Tobacco Free Cleveland County Coalition and Stu...

Local coalition and youth to clean up local parks

The Norman Transcript

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Members of Cleveland County Turning Point/Tobacco Free Cleveland County Coalition and Students Working against Tobacco or SWAT are joining thousands of adults and kids across the country who are taking part in Kick Butts Day, a nationwide initiative that makes youth advocates and leaders in the effort to stop youth tobacco use in their communities.

This year for Kick Butts Day, members of TFCC and SWAT are teaming up to host a "Cigarette Butt Clean-Up" in Norman's Reaves and Andrews parks. The event will be noon to 3 p.m. March 29.

The free and family-friendly communitywide event will have free food, music by local band Harvest Moon, moon bounces and more. Volunteers will get a free T-shirt and if community service hours are required, this is a great event to attend, organizers said.

Every day, 1,200 Americans die due to tobacco related diseases, event organizers said. Tobacco kills more Americans each year than alcohol, cocaine, crack, heroin, car accidents, homicide, suicide, fires and AIDS combined, they said.

Youth from the SWAT Teams also will conduct educational activities for community members on several issues:

The environment and cigarette butts litter

Importance of youth advocacy and the fight against Big Tobacco advertising

Effects of tobacco use on the body

Secondhand smoke exposure

Tobacco Free Youth Sporting Venues

"The goal of this event is to encourage community members to volunteer for a great cause to keep our parks clean of litter, as well as increase awareness of issues related to tobacco use and advertising" said Travis Humphrey, TFCC Coalition Chair. "During the event, the youth are sending two important messages: they want the tobacco industry to stop targeting them with advertising and the importance of having leaders at all levels of government, business community, civic ... to do more to protect them from tobacco."

The coalition also is encouraging smokers and other tobacco users in Cleveland County to call the free Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669).

The Helpline's professional Quit Coaches work with callers to create a quit plan tailored to their individual needs, including up to four additional personal coaching sessions. The Helpline's hours of operation are 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. seven days a week, and staff will return any messages left after hours. For more information about the Helpline, see [www.ok.gov/tset/Programs/Tobacco\\_Use\\_Prevention\\_and\\_Cessation/](http://www.ok.gov/tset/Programs/Tobacco_Use_Prevention_and_Cessation/).

In addition to the free coaching sessions, nicotine patches or gum are available at no cost to participants who are uninsured or on Medicare. Quit Coaches assist other callers to identify and access pharmacy benefits that may be available to them through their employer, Medicaid or other insurance.