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Smokers encouraged today to give up the habit

By Keith Purtell
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Katey Sherrick said starting smoking at age 16 was the worst decision she ever made.

“It’s so addictive; you can’t put it down,” she said. “I quit several times. Then I quit for good on June 21.”

The American Cancer Society and the Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust are urging all smokers in Oklahoma to quit smoking for at least two days — the Great American Smokeout today and Oklahoma’s Centennial on Friday.

Sherrick, 42, said she knows smokers who successfully quit using nicotine gum or a transdermal patch. But, she finally tried a prescription drug called Chantix (also known as Chantax) offered for free by the Cherokee Nation to Native Americans.

Sherrick said she feels much better now.

“I’ve got more energy, and I’m way more productive,” she said. “I was working out and smoking at the same time, which is just stupid. But now I can work out and not feel bad; I can enjoy it.”

The Muskogee Turning Point Coalition is encouraging smokers and other tobacco users in Muskogee to get ready to participate in the Great American Smokeout by stopping by the Muskogee County Health Department 7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. today.

Tobacco users can trade their tobacco products for a free quit kit, nicotine patches and a chance to win a “cold turkey.” Free nicotine patches will be offered to uninsured participants who sign up for free help from the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline.

“There’s nothing better a tobacco user can do for their health than to quit,” said Megan Shea, cessation coordinator for the Communities of Excellence Tobacco Program. “We’re asking everyone in Muskogee County to help spread the word about this free event to their loved ones and co-workers. For the sake of health and family, the Great American Smokeout is a great time to practice quitting or to give up the habit for good.”

What to do

- Tobacco users can receive a quit kit, nicotine patches and a chance to win a “cold turkey” by stopping by the Muskogee County Health Department, 530 S. 34th St., at 7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. today.
- Tobacco users are also encouraged to contact the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline at (800) QUIT NOW (800-784-8669). The Helpline provides free, personalized assistance by professional cessation specialists. Callers enrolled in the Helpline’s “Free and Clear” program work with the same “quit coach” throughout the quitting process.