



Published February 19, 2009 12:12 am

Great American spit out

Members of the Cleveland County Turning Point ? Tobacco Free Cleveland County coalition are encouraging all tobacco users in Cleveland County to participate in the Great American Spit Out today.

The Great American Spit Out is a one-day push to encourage spit-tobacco users to quit. The day also is used to encourage schools and communities to examine what is being done to keep kids 100 percent tobacco-free.

Spit tobacco often conjures images of older men, baseball players and cowboys, but according to the 2007 Oklahoma Youth Tobacco Survey, 20.4 percent of high school boys reported spit tobacco use.

In observance of the Great American Spit Out and "Through With Chew Week" (Feb. 15-21) the SWAT or Students Working Against Tobacco team at Alcott Middle School outlined their bodies in chalk on sidewalks around the school. Sixteen "bodies" were outlined to signify the number of Oklahomans who die daily because of tobacco use. The students also wrote messages alongside the bodies with statistical phrases like 'Smokeless tobacco and snuff contain 3,000 chemicals including 28 carcinogens.'

"Despite (settlement) restrictions on youth advertising, smokeless tobacco products continue to be tailored and aggressively marketed towards youth," Travis Humphrey, Health for Friends, chairman of the Tobacco Control subcommittee, said.

"As a coalition, we want to educate our community on the marketing tactics of the tobacco industry as well on the myths surrounding spit tobacco use, like using any form of spit tobacco is a safer alternative to smoking. However that is not true and a person who uses eight to 10 dips or chews a day receives the same amount of nicotine as a heavy smoker who smokes 30 to 40 cigarettes a day. For the sake of health and family, the Great American Spit Out is a great time to practice quitting or to give up the habit for good."

Tobacco users are urged to call the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW or 1-800-784-8669. The service is free and confidential, and trained tobacco cessation specialists will develop a customized quitting plan.

The hours from Sunday to Saturday are 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. Services are available in both English and Spanish, and TYY services are available for the hearing impaired. Many Oklahomans qualify for free patches and gum.

The SWAT Program is part of the Cleveland County Tobacco Control Program and is housed at Norman Regional Health System. The health system offers a group cessation program called QuitSmart. For more information, call Jerry Deming at 307-3175.

For further information on SWAT and Tobacco Free Cleveland County Coalition, call Candida Manion at 307-6626.