

November 16, 2021

Tobacco Free Florida in Pinellas Calls For Quit Attempts During The Great American Smokeout



St. Petersburg, Fla. – With the annual Great American Smokeout taking place November 18, Tobacco Free Florida in Pinellas is using this observance to encourage people to make a plan or to quit smoking using the free tools and services available to Floridians.

Tracing its history back more than 40 years, the American Cancer Society's Great American Smokeout marks a date when smokers are encouraged to use the date to either make a plan or to begin their quit journey.¹ This year, the American Cancer society is highlighting tobacco-related disparities during the Great American Smokeout.

While rates of cigarette smoking have declined, some groups smoke at higher rates and suffer disproportionately from smoking-related illnesses. The health burden of tobacco use is especially high among racial and ethnic minorities, low-income individuals, the LGBT community and those with mental health conditions.² Additionally, lower-income populations have less access to health care, making it more likely that they are diagnosed at later stages of diseases and conditions.³

Local businesses across Pinellas County use this event to educate their employees about available tobacco cessation related benefits and community resources. Some also use the event to promote positive health behaviors among all their employees by challenging smokers to quit for the day and non-smokers to give up something that they enjoy (e.g. sugar, cookies, candy etc.) for the day as well.

Quitting smoking can add up to 10 years to life expectancy.⁴ The health benefits of quitting smoking include reducing the risk of heart attack and stroke, improving lung function, and lowering the chances of getting an array of different cancers.^{5,6}

"Most people who smoke want to quit, so it is important to connect them with resources that will increase their chances of success," said Noliyanda James, Tobacco Policy Coordinator for DOH-Pinellas. "Tobacco Free Florida has services like Web Quit, Phone Quit, Group Quit and nicotine replacement therapy that are free for all Floridians, regardless of insurance status. The Great American Smokeout provides a wonderful opportunity for anyone to start their quit journey."

Information on the history of the Great American Smokeout, national activities to support quitting and other materials can be found at <https://www.cancer.org/healthy/stay-away-from-tobacco/great-american-smokeout.html>. Tobacco Free Florida's quit tips, tools and more are available by visiting www.TobaccoFreeFlorida.com or by calling 1-877-U-CAN-NOW.

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About Tobacco Free Florida

The Florida Department of Health's Tobacco Free Florida campaign is a statewide cessation and prevention campaign funded by Florida's tobacco settlement fund. Since the program

began in 2007, more than 254,000 Floridians have successfully quit using one of Tobacco Free Florida's free tools and services. There are now approximately 451,000 fewer adult smokers in Florida than there was 10 years ago, and the state has saved \$17.7 billion in health care costs.⁷ To learn more about Tobacco Free Florida's Quit Your Way services, visit www.TobaccoFreeFlorida.com or follow the campaign on Facebook at www.facebook.com/TobaccoFreeFlorida or on Twitter at www.twitter.com/tobaccofreefla.

¹ "History of the Great American Smokeout." American Cancer Society. <https://www.cancer.org/healthy/stay-away-from-tobacco/great-american-smokeout/history-of-the-great-american-smokeout.html>. [accessed 10 August 2020.]

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Best Practices User Guide: Health Equity in Tobacco Prevention and Control*. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2015.[Accessed 2021 September 21]

³ Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. [Tobacco and Socioeconomic Status](#) [PDF—56.2 KB][pdf icon](#)[external icon](#). Washington, D.C.: Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, 2015 [Accessed 2021 September 21]

⁴ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *The Health Consequences of Smoking—50 Years of Progress: A Report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2014. [accessed 10 August 2020.]

⁵ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS). (2014). *Let's Make the Next Generation Tobacco-Free: Your Guide to the 50th Anniversary Surgeon General's Report on Smoking and Health* (Consumer Booklet). Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health. [accessed 10 August 2020.]

⁶ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. [A Report of the Surgeon General. How Tobacco Smoke Causes Disease: What It Means to You](#). Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2010 [accessed 2020 August 10].

⁷ Mann, Nathan M, Nonnemaker, James M., Thompson, Jesse. "Smoking-Attributable Health Care Costs in Florida and Potential Health Care Cost Savings Associated with Reductions in Adult Smoking Prevalence." 2016.