

American Cancer Society's 29th Great American Smokeout(R) Urges Smokers to Quit for the Day and Go Smoke-free

National Kickoff Event to Take Place in Philadelphia on Nov. 17

PRNewswire
ATLANTA

The American Cancer Society is urging millions of smokers across the country to give up smoking for the day and perhaps for good during its 29th American Cancer Society Great American Smokeout(R) on Thursday, Nov. 17. For nearly three decades, the Society has designated the third Thursday of each November as a day for smokers nationwide to kick the deadly habit of smoking. This year, the Society is also encouraging communities to protect the health of all Americans by supporting smoke-free policies.

"Smoking remains the leading preventable cause of death in the United States, where it causes nearly one in five deaths," said Stephen F. Sener, MD, national volunteer president of the American Cancer Society. "We know that it is difficult to quit smoking. That is why we urge smokers to make a plan today to quit smoking, including getting the help we know can double their chances of success. The American Cancer Society urges all smokers to join the increasing ranks of former smokers, now numbering 46 million Americans. Our telephone cessation service, Quitline(R) (1-877-YES-QUIT), is a good place to start."

The year's Smokeout will kick off with an event in Philadelphia, where the Society is actively engaged in a local campaign to pass a comprehensive city-wide smoke-free workplace law. The event will take place at Bridgid's, a smoke-free restaurant and bar in Philadelphia, and will focus on the dangers of secondhand smoke, encouraging smokers to quit, and urging lawmakers in Philadelphia and across the country to support smoke-free policies.

Phil Martelli, head coach of men's basketball at Saint Joseph's University, and Fran Dunphy, head coach of men's basketball at the University of Pennsylvania, will be featured speakers at the event. The two coaches are based in Philadelphia and are participants in the Coaches vs. Cancer(R) program, collaboration between the Society and the National Association of Basketball Coaches. In addition, Philadelphia mayor John Street's top health official, Gwen Foster, is scheduled to attend.

The idea for the Great American Smokeout grew out of a 1974 event when Lynn R. Smith, editor of the Monticello Times in Minnesota, spearheaded the first D-Day or Don't Smoke Day in Central Minnesota. The idea caught on, and on Nov. 18, 1976, the California Division of the American Cancer Society succeeded in getting nearly one million smokers to quit for the day. That California event marked the first Great American Smokeout, which went nationwide in 1977.

Today, the Great American Smokeout is perhaps the Society's most recognized event. It has become a powerful venue to not only help all tobacco users quit, but to educate the public about the importance of tobacco-control policies such as smoke-free laws. For more information visit: www.cancer.org/smokeout. The Great American Smokeout(R) is a registered trademark of the American Cancer Society.

Even though smoking rates have declined since the first Great American Smokeout, tobacco continues to be a major cancer killer. Smoking remains the leading preventable cause of death in the United States, causing 30 percent of the estimated 570,280 cancer deaths expected to occur in 2005. Secondhand smoke is also a health hazard, causing 3,000 otherwise healthy nonsmokers to die of lung cancer every year.

The American Cancer Society offers support and information 24 hours a day, seven days a week for

smokers who want to quit during Smokeout and every day, by calling 1-800-ACS-2345 or logging on to www.cancer.org.

Since its inception, the Society's telephone cessation service, Quitline (1-877-YES-QUIT), has helped over 160,000 people, and is expected to field 48,000 calls in 2005 alone.

The Society works with communities and workplaces across the country on smoke-free policies to reduce tobacco-related illnesses and ensure that all Americans have the right to breathe smoke-free air. Through its advocacy and public awareness efforts, the Society is leading the charge to pass smoke-free legislation at the community and state level so that all Americans have the right to work or dine where they choose without compromising their health and quality of life. Currently, more than 2,000 communities in the United States are smoke-free, including 14 states with statewide laws that limit smoking in all workplaces, and/or bars, and/or restaurants.

The American Cancer Society is dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem by saving lives, diminishing suffering and preventing cancer through research, education, advocacy and service. Founded in 1913 and with national headquarters in Atlanta, the Society has 13 regional Divisions and local offices in 3,400 communities, involving millions of volunteers across the United States.

SOURCE: American Cancer Society

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Web site: <http://www.cancer.org/>
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