American Cancer Society Marks 34th Great American Smokeout® by Encouraging Smokers to Quit

Less Smoking Leads to More Birthdays

Atlanta 2009/11/06 -As the official sponsor of birthdays, the American Cancer Society marks the 34th Great American Smokeout on November 19 by encouraging smokers to use the date to make a plan to quit, or to plan in advance and quit smoking that day. By doing so, smokers will be taking an important step towards a healthier life – one that can lead to reducing cancer risk and creating more birthdays. Researchers say that quitting smoking can increase life expectancy – smokers who quit at age 35 gain an average of eight years of life expectancy; those who quit at age 55 gain about five years; and even long term smokers who quit at 65 gain three years . Smokers who want to quit can call the American Cancer Society Quit For Life® Program operated and managed by Free & Clear® at 1-800-227-2345 for tobacco cessation and coaching services that can help increase their chances of quitting for good.

Research shows that people who stop smoking before age 50 can cut their risk of dying in the next 15 years in half compared with those who continue to smoke. Smokers who quit also reduce their risk of lung cancer – ten years after quitting, the lung cancer death rate is about half that of a continuing smoker's. Some of the health effects of quitting are almost instant, too – heart rate and blood pressure drop 20 minutes after quitting.

"We know that quitting smoking is tough and that most smokers have to try several times before quitting for good," said Alan G. Thorson, MD, FACS, national volunteer president for the American Cancer Society. "The American Cancer Society offers a variety of effective resources ranging from online tips and tools to personalized telephone coaching by trained specialists. We hope that smokers will use the Great American Smokeout to map out a course of action that will help them to quit, and in turn to stay well and celebrate more birthdays."

The Great American Smokeout Web site (www.cancer.org/GreatAmericans) contains user-friendly tips and tools towards a smoke-free life. In addition to tip sheets and calculators, the site also offers downloadable desktop helpers to assist with planning to quit and succeeding in staying tobacco-free. The Quit Clock allows users to pick a quit day within 30 days, then counts down the selected day with tips for each day; and the Craving Stopper helps smokers beat cravings by offering a fun distraction.

The American Cancer Society created the trademarked concept for and held its first Great American Smokeout in 1976 as a way to inspire and encourage smokers to quit for a day. One million people quit smoking for a day at the 1976 event in California. The Great American Smokeout encourages smokers to commit to making a long-term plan to quit smoking for good.

Important facts about tobacco use:

- Tobacco use remains the single largest preventable cause of disease and premature death in the U.S.
- Cigarette smoking accounts for about 443,000 premature deaths – including 49,400 in nonsmokers.
- Thirty percent of cancer deaths, including 87 percent of lung cancer deaths, can be attributed to tobacco.
- Smoking also accounts for $193 billion in health care expenditures and productivity losses.
- Great progress is being made in reducing tobacco use in the U.S., with adult smoking rates in 2007 declining among all adults to 19.8 percent.

About the American Cancer Society

The American Cancer Society combines an unyielding passion with nearly a century of experience to save lives and end suffering from cancer. As a global grassroots force of more than three million volunteers, we fight for every birthday threatened by every cancer in every community. We save lives by helping people stay well by

preventing cancer or detecting it early; helping people get well by being there for them during and after a cancer diagnosis; by finding cures through investment in groundbreaking discovery; and by fighting back by rallying lawmakers to pass laws to defeat cancer and by rallying communities worldwide to join the fight. As the nation's largest non-governmental investor in cancer research, contributing about $3.4 billion, we turn what we know about cancer into what we do. As a result, about 11 million people in America who have had cancer and countless more who have avoided it will be celebrating birthdays this year. To learn more about us or to get help, call us any time, day or night, at 1-800-227-2345 or visit cancer.org.

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