Smokers Urged to Make a Plan to Quit During American Cancer Society's Great American Smokeout®

Atlanta 2007/11/13 -The American Cancer Society will celebrate the 31st anniversary of the Great American Smokeout on Thursday, November 15. With exactly half of the United States now protected by smoke-free laws, and a variety of cessation resources available, there has never been a better time to quit smoking and enjoy the health benefits.

On November 15, Americans who smoke and want to quit to are urged to call the American Cancer Society's Quitline®, a clinically proven, free telephone-based counseling program, at 1-800-ACS-2345, or to log on to www.cancer.org/greatamericans, to embark on a personal plan to quit.

"The American Cancer Society is here to help smokers who want to quit, and we have an abundance of resources to assist. We urge smokers to learn more about quitting and make a plan to begin a smoke-free life by calling the Society's Quitline at 1-800-ACS-2345," said Elmer E. Huerta, M.D., M.P.H., president of the Society.

The Society's Quitline is a clinically proven, free telephone-based counseling program that is available in 12 states and the District of Columbia as well as in more than 75 businesses and health plans nationwide. Quitline staff have provided support to more than 280,000 smokers since its inception in 2000. Studies have shown that more than 40 percent of people who were contacted six months after completing the Quitline program remained smoke-free, which puts the Society's quit rates among the highest in the industry.

The Great American Smokeout Web site (www.cancer.org/greatamericans) features new desktop helpers, including a Quit Clock and a Craving Stopper. These tools can be downloaded to a computer desktop to help smokers pick a quit day, prepare for quitting, and offer support during and after quitting. In addition, the site will continue to provide tips, tools, and resources, as well as the successful Quitline call back feature, which allows smokers to submit a short form to be directly contacted by a trained specialist who will provide assistance during a quit attempt.

According to the U.S. Surgeon General in 1990, people who quit smoking, regardless of age, live longer than people who continue to smoke, and quitting smoking substantially decreases the risk of lung, laryngeal, esophageal, oral, pancreatic, bladder, and cervical cancers.

In addition to encouraging smokers to make a plan to quit, the Great American Smokeout is a day for Americans to join the American Cancer Society and its sister advocacy organization, the American Cancer Society Cancer Action NetworkSM (ACS CAN) in their efforts to advocate for smoke-free laws in communities nationwide. The combination of smoke-free communities and smoking cessation support is critical to helping smokers quit and stay tobacco-free.

"With exactly half of country now protected by smoke-free laws, the lifesaving results of comprehensive tobacco control efforts in the United States are clear," added Dr. Huerta. "By continuing efforts to reduce exposure to toxic secondhand smoke, and helping more Americans quit smoking, we will continue to make progress against cancer."

The American Cancer Society Great American Smokeout grew out of a 1971 event in Randolph, Mass., in which Arthur P. Mullaney asked people to give up cigarettes for a day and donate the money they would have spent on cigarettes to a high school scholarship fund. In 1974, Lynn R. Smith, editor of the Monticello Times in Minnesota, spearheaded the state's first D-Day, or Don't Smoke Day. 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 the next year.

The Great American Smokeout is part of the American Cancer Society Great American Health Challenge, a year-round initiative that encourages Americans to adopt healthy lifestyles to reduce their risk of cancer. More information on the Great American Health Challenge is available at www.cancer.org/greatamericans or by calling 1-800-ACS-2345.

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. For more information anytime, call toll free 1-800-ACS-2345 or visit www.cancer.org.

Busola Afolabi
Manager, Media Relations
American Cancer Society
(404) 417-5894
busola.afolabi@cancer.org