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Local events planned for Great American Smokeout

Thursday, Nov. 18, is the 35th annual Great American Smokeout, a nationwide public health campaign that engages people of all ages to be tobacco-free for 24 hours and for good, leading to a lifetime of better health.

Free quit smoking classes for adults will be held from 10-12 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 17 at the South County Family Health Center at 7820 South Tamiami Trail in Venice, and from 10 a.m.-noon Thursday, Nov. 18, at the Sarasota County Health Department, 2200 Ringling Blvd. in Sarasota. To register for quit-smoking class, call the Gulfcoast South Area Health Education Center at 941-552-1280.

Since tobacco use starts at a young age, there will be several youth-oriented activities this weekend including the 2010 Cigarette Litter Pick Up Day from 2-4 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 20 at North Jetty Park at the southern tip of Casey Key in Nokomis. Sponsored by the Students Working Against Tobacco, Community Putting Prevention to Work, the Tobacco Free Partnership of Sarasota County, and Sarasota County Parks and Recreation, the event is a rallying point to help youths see first-hand the environmental impact of tobacco use, to prevent non-users from starting and help those who would like to quit.

Established by the American Cancer Society, the Great American Smokeout challenges people to plan to quit smoking that day, or to use the day to make a plan to quit. "The Great American Smokeout is a perfect opportunity to educate people about the many effective ways to successfully quit and to encourage them to make a long-term plan to quit for good," says Kisha Gaines, M.P.H., Tobacco Prevention Specialist at the Sarasota County Health Department.

Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of disease and premature death in the United States. Each year an estimated 28,700 adult Floridians die from smoking. Despite these risks, more than 2.5 million Floridians, or 17.5 percent of the adult population, are current cigarette smokers. Approximately 1,000 children and teenagers

become regular smokers every day in the United States, and 4,000 try smoking for the first time. Data from the 2010 Florida Youth Tobacco Survey, a statewide school-based confidential survey, reported that 33 percent of high school students in Sarasota County have used some form of tobacco (cigarette, cigars, or a smokeless tobacco product) in the past 30 days, while only 22 percent of high school students in the rest of the state reported use. In addition, 64.3 percent of students reported they were exposed to second-hand smoke during the past seven days.

Tobacco Free Florida, the statewide youth prevention and adult cessation campaign, offers a number of free resources to help smokers quit.

- Phone: Call the Florida Quitline at 1-877-U-CAN-NOW to speak with a Quit Coach who will help assess the user's addiction and create a personalized quit plan.
- Online: Enroll in online counseling with the Florida Quitline, where each user can create a personalized, web-based quit plan. Visit <https://www.quitnow.net/florida> to enroll.
- In-person: Visit the Florida Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) Network's website, <http://ahectobacco.com>, to locate a local AHEC and sign up for Quit Smoking Now group classes.

Sarasota County residents and seasonal visitors are encouraged to visit the Tobacco Free Florida website, www.tobaccofreeflorida.com, which is a comprehensive resource for smokers and non-smokers that features effective quitting methods, free nicotine replacement therapy assistance, smoking stats, a calendar of statewide events, social media support, Florida Quitline access and more. [Click here](#) for local information about Tobacco Prevention efforts that are underway on a year-round basis.

Tobacco Free Florida is a state-wide youth prevention and adult cessation campaign that was launched in February 2008 to reach millions of Floridians through advertising, online social media, grassroots initiatives and educational outreach. The program is financed by the state's tobacco settlement fund and engages culturally and economically diverse audiences with its high impact messaging. For more information on Tobacco Free Florida, visit www.tobaccofreeflorida.com.

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