



SCGOVHEALTH

Sarasota County Health Department | Florida Department of Health
scgov.net | 941-861-5000 | Comcast 19/Verizon 32

Nov. 9, 2011

Media contact: Dianne Shipley, 941-861-2852, cell: 941-302-1058,
Dianne_Shipley@doh.state.fl.us

Project contact: Kisha Gaines, 941-861-2805, cell: 941-806-8452,
Kisha_Gaines@doh.state.fl.us

Two local events planned for 36th annual Great American Smokeout

Thursday, Nov. 17, marks the 36th annual Great American Smokeout. Sponsored by the American Cancer Society, this nationwide public health event challenges people to plan in advance and quit smoking that day, or to use the day to make a plan to quit. The Tobacco Free Partnership of Sarasota County, in collaboration with Tobacco-Free Florida, is hosting two local events on **Thursday, Nov. 17**, to encourage people of all ages to be tobacco-free for 24 hours:

- A Tools to Quit Smoking class for adults from 2:30-4:30 p.m. at the Sarasota County Health Department, 2200 Ringling Blvd., Sarasota
- A Students Working Against Tobacco Youth Rally from 3:30-5:30 p.m. at the Venice Community Center, 326 Nokomis Ave. S, Venice

Both events are free. To register for the Tools to Quit Smoking class, call Karla Brody of the Gulfcoast South Area Health Education Center at 941-552-1280, or Kisha Gaines in the Tobacco Prevention Program at the Sarasota County Health Department at 941-861-2805. For more information about the youth event, contact either Sarasota County Tobacco Prevention Specialists Hilary Woodcum or Emma Triplet at 941-861-2997.

“The Great American Smokeout is a perfect opportunity to educate people about the many effective ways available to successfully quit while encouraging them to make a long-term plan to quit for good,” said Kisha Gaines, tobacco prevention specialist with the Sarasota County Health Department.

“For those who succeed, this can lead to a lifetime of better health,” she added. “A comprehensive quit plan is an essential part of a successful quit attempt. These events raise awareness about the dangers of smoking and the many effective resources available to successfully quit.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of disease and premature death in the United States. Cigarette use alone results in [an estimated 28,700 deaths in Florida each year](#). Despite the known dangers of smoking, the [CDC - Tobacco Control State Highlights 2010 - Florida - Smoking & Tobacco Use Report](#) reveals that more than 2.5 million Floridians, or 17.1 percent of the adult population, are current cigarette smokers.

But health officials say there is good news. From 2007 to 2010, the smoking rate for adults in Florida decreased by 18.6 percent, resulting in nearly 500,000 fewer smokers. About 64 percent of adults in the state who have ever smoked have quit and there are more former smokers in Florida than current smokers.

Seven out of 10 adult smokers report that they want to quit completely. In 2010, 52.8 percent of cigarette smokers in Florida made a quit attempt. Those who were not successful should continue trying because most former smokers make several attempts before finally quitting permanently. In fact, the average smoker attempts to quit between eight and 11 times before ultimately quitting for good.

“The Great American Smokeout is a motivating public health event that is sponsored by the American Cancer Society, an invaluable partner in our efforts to support current tobacco users to quit,” said Kim Berfield, deputy secretary for the Florida Department of Health. “We encourage people of all ages in Sarasota County and across the state to make this the day they commit to quit smoking, the most important step they can take for a healthier and longer life.”

Tobacco Free Florida offers a number of free and convenient resources to help smokers quit.

- Telephone: Call the Florida Quitline at 1-877-U-CAN-NOW to speak with a quit coach who will help you assess your addiction and help you create a personalized quit plan.
- Online: Enroll in the Web Coach®, which will help you create your own web-based quit plan that’s right for you, visit www.quitnow.net/florida.
- In-person: Visit the Florida Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) Network’s website, <http://ahectobacco.com>, to locate your local AHEC and sign up for Quit Smoking Now group classes.

ABOUT TOBACCO FREE FLORIDA

Tobacco Free Florida (TFF) is a statewide cessation and prevention campaign funded by Florida’s tobacco settlement fund. The program is managed by the Florida Department of Health, specifically the Bureau of Tobacco Prevention Program. Its mission is to combat the pervasive problem of tobacco use in the Sunshine State, where each year, more than 28,000 Floridians die from smoking and tobacco-related diseases, costing the state an estimated \$19.6 billion in healthcare costs and lost productivity.

Since its inception in February 2008, TFF has reached millions of Floridians through advertising, grassroots initiatives, social media and public relations efforts as a means of providing information and offer resources to help tobacco users quit.

Sarasota County residents and seasonal visitors who are looking for support in quitting smoking or smokeless tobacco use are encouraged to call the Florida Quitline at 1-877-U-CAN-NOW to speak with a quit coach.

To learn about TFF and the state's free quit smoking resources, visit www.tobaccofreeflorida.com or follow the campaign on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/TobaccoFreeFlorida> or Twitter at www.twitter.com/tobaccofreefla.

MEDIA NOTE:

Visit <http://www.sarasotahealth.org/communityprograms/tobaccoprevention.htm> for local information about tobacco prevention efforts that are under way on a year-round basis.

-end-