

Nov. 8, 2013

## Employers encourage smokers to quit tobacco for Great American Smokeout

SARASOTA COUNTY — Local businesses are encouraging their staff to leave their cigarettes and other tobacco products at home during the 2013 Great American Smokeout Thursday, Nov. 21.

With support from the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County's Tobacco Prevention Program, more employers throughout the county are promoting a healthier workforce and environment for their employees by offering cessation services through their health insurance options and creating tobacco-free workplaces.



“Most employers are not aware of the additional costs associated with smokers. A recent report shows that smokers can cost their employers nearly \$6,000 more per year than non-smokers in healthcare costs, absenteeism and through lost productivity,” said Pascale Edouard, employer cessation specialist with the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County. “Employers are looking for creative ways to reduce overhead costs; going tobacco-free and providing smokers with options to help them quit is a great way to accomplish this task. The benefits don’t just stop at the employer. Individuals who quit today can start to reverse the damage tobacco use has done to their bodies.”

**Nov. 21 is nationally observed as the Great American Smokeout which urges smokers to quit tobacco use.**

The Great American Smokeout is a national observance that takes place on the third Thursday of November each year. The observance urges smokers to quit tobacco use, even if just for one day.

A number of local employers, including Goodwill Manasota and A Banyan Residence in Venice are using this day to highlight cessation services available to their employees and encourage them to make a quit plan.

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GREAT AMERICAN SMOKEOUT

“A tobacco-free environment is a healthier environment,” said Bob Rosinsky, president and CEO of Goodwill Manasota. “This move will have a positive impact in many ways, including enhanced community life, improved productivity through better health and potential decreases in health care costs. A tobacco-free campus will make the Goodwill Manasota a healthier place to work and learn.”

Employers interested in learning more about how going tobacco-free and providing cessation support to their employees can help reduce cost and increase productivity are encouraged to contact the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota’s Tobacco Prevention Program. The program can provide consultation services, signage and other material resources at no cost to employers.

For more information about free tobacco-cessation services available to all Florida residents, including the “3 Ways to Quit,” call toll-free 1-888-U CAN NOW (1-866-822-6669).

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