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NEWS RELEASE

EVERY CIGARETTE MAKES YOU SICK ***Floridians can quit today for a healthy 2011***

Port Charlotte (FL) – Every year, millions of Floridians attempt to quit smoking. As 2010 comes to a close and Florida smokers consider making their 2011 New Year's resolutions, the Charlotte County Health Department, Florida Department of Health and Tobacco Free Florida can help them quit for good with free support through phone, web and in-person quit smoking resources.

On the heels of the groundbreaking U.S. Surgeon General's report released December 9, it is more important than ever before to quit smoking immediately. The report emphasizes the importance of quitting early in life, in order to protect immunity and minimize the damage caused by each cigarette. The report adds no level of exposure to tobacco smoke is safe.

Although permanently quitting tobacco is very difficult, it is not impossible. Sixty-one percent of adult Floridians who have ever smoked have quit and there are more former smokers in Florida than current smokers. In 2009, about 58 percent Floridian smokers tried to quit.

Step One: Set a Date

The first step one needs to take is to set a quit date. Once the quit date is set, cigarettes, ashtrays and lighters should be removed from the home, office and vehicle.

Step Two: Get Help

"Whether a smoker succeeds in stopping smoking depends on a balance between that individual's motivation to stop smoking and his or her degree of dependence on tobacco. Information and programs are available in our community to help individuals succeed," said Mary Kay Burns, Charlotte County Health Department Interim Director.

Tobacco Free Florida 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 including free nicotine patches and gum (while supplies last.)
- 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: Register for a FREE 90 minute "Tools to Quit Smoking" seminar offered by our local Gulfcoast South Area Education Center (GCSAHEC.) Classes are held in Port Charlotte and in Punta Gorda. AHEC provides information, education, counseling and support including free nicotine replacement therapy. For more information call 1-877-848-6696.

Step Three: Keep Trying

"Quitting is only half the battle," said Kim Berfield, Deputy Secretary of Policy and Advocacy for the Florida Department of Health. "Relapses happen, but it's important that people keep trying and trying." Most successful quitters make several attempts before finally quitting permanently. In fact, the average number of attempts varies anywhere from five to more than 10.

For information and programs to help you successfully quit smoking, visit the Charlotte County Health Department Website at www.charlottechd.com.

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