



MEDIA RELEASE

KNOX COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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KCHD and partners celebrate the Great American Smokeout

Knoxville, Tenn. — The Knox County Health Department (KCHD), Smoke-Free Knoxville and community partners will mark the Great American Smokeout (GASO), Thursday, Nov. 17, with youth-focused events and an appeal to all community members to congratulate those who have quit and encourage others to join them. Created by the American Cancer Society, the Great American Smokeout takes place on the third Thursday of November every year. The national observation is designed to encourage smokers to use the date to make a plan to quit, or plan in advance and quit smoking that day.

“We’re here to encourage, support and assist anyone trying to break a nicotine addiction and move toward a life free from smoking, dipping, or using any other tobacco products like electronic smoking devices,” said Kerri Thompson, public health educator in KCHD’s Tobacco Use Prevention and Control Program. “We know how hard it can be to kick the habit. Whether it’s calling us, the QuitLine or talking with your health care provider, we encourage everyone to learn about all the available options that can help you succeed.”

Quit resources and information:

- Tennessee Tobacco QuitLine: 1-800-QUIT-NOW
- KCHD and local resources for those trying to quit: 865-215-5445
- Training for health care providers in the [5As approach](#) for tobacco interventions: 865-215-5170
- The Smoke-Free Knoxville Coalition: smokefreeknoxville.com

Focusing on preventing tobacco use among youth, KCHD and its partners will provide education, quit resources and information on never starting tobacco products at two GASO events on Nov. 17. Partnering with the University of Tennessee, KCHD and others will host an educational event at 10 a.m. on the pedestrian walkway. Partners include the University of Tennessee Center for Health Education and Wellness, Be Well, Global Service Projects, American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, Student Government Association, Smoke-Free Knoxville, and others. In addition, KCHD will join Smoke-Free Knoxville and the Parent Resource Center to host a Smokeout Pep Rally at Whittle Springs Middle School for both parents and students at 2:30 p.m.

Tobacco use remains the single largest preventable cause of disease and premature death in the U.S. Reducing tobacco use is one of the priority health issues outlined in KCHD’s [2014-2015 Community Health Assessment](#). Tobacco use, particularly in youth and pregnant women, as well as the increased use of e-cigarettes and vaping products are two areas of concern outlined in the assessment. In fact, e-cigarette use among middle and high school students tripled from 2013 to 2014, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



In 2014, more than 21 percent of Knox County adults were smoking cigarettes. And in 2013, approximately 18 percent of public high school students in Knox County reported they smoked.

The benefits of quitting smoking can begin almost immediately. A smoker's heart rate and blood pressure drop just 20 minutes after stopping, and carbon monoxide levels in blood drop to normal after 12 hours. Those who stop for two to three months experience improved circulation and lung function. And after five years, the risk of various cancers is about half that of a person who is still smoking. After 15 years, the risk of coronary heart disease is that of a non-smoker's.

About Knox County Health Department:

The Knox County Health Department (KCHD) is a governmental agency dedicated to making every person a healthy person. As the first health department in Tennessee to achieve national accreditation by the Public Health Accreditation Board, KCHD's mission is to encourage, promote and assure the development of an active, healthy community through innovative public health practices. The organization conducts disease surveillance, prevention and control; emergency preparedness; nutrition and physical activity promotion; tobacco use prevention; health equity promotion; immunizations; and much more. For more information, visit www.knoxcounty.org/health.

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