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Support Friends, Family Who Quit Tobacco – If Only for a Day

More than 40 community partners will come together Thursday to help improve health in Helena by encouraging people to stop smoking. The effort is part of the Great American Smokeout, an annual event sponsored by the American Cancer Society. The event takes place this year on Nov. 17.

Among the partners who will participate are Lewis and Clark Public Health, St. Peter's Hospital, medical and dental clinics, local businesses, and local and state government offices. They will hang flyers, send emails, post on social media, and use other tactics to educate employees, clients, and other local residents about the risks of tobacco use and resources available to help with quitting.

The goal of the Great American Smokeout is to encourage smokers to quit for one day, in the hope it leads to quitting the habit permanently.

Because youth are a target of the tobacco industry, some middle and high schools, including Helena High, will participate by engaging students in an exercise that builds strength and range of motion. Thirty repetitions will acknowledge the 30 Montanans who die each week because of tobacco-related causes. Close to \$440 million is spent in the state each year on health care for tobacco-related illnesses, according to public health officials.

Research shows that the support of others can make a big difference in a person's efforts to quit smoking. The Montana Tobacco Use Prevention Program, a program of the state Department of Public Health and Human Services, offers free cessation services, dedicated coaching, and nicotine replacement therapy through the Montana Tobacco Quit Line.

To join the Great American Smokeout challenge, contact www.QuitNowMontana.com or 1-800-QUIT-NOW. For more information, contact Sarah Shapiro, tobacco prevention health educator at Lewis and Clark Public Health, 457-8924 or sshapiro@lccountymt.gov.