

Subject: American Cancer Society Celebrates 30th Anniversary of the Great American Smokeout(r)

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14 Texas Cities Choose to Go Smoke-free

AUSTIN-November 13, 2006 - As America celebrates the 30th anniversary of the American Cancer Society's Great American Smokeout(r) this Thursday, Nov. 16, the Society recognizes 14 Texas cities for choosing to go smoke-free. As smokers prepare to quit for a day on the Smokeout, the proliferation of public smoking laws provides an additional incentive to quit. Most recently, the city of Houston adopted an ordinance in October making virtually all workplaces, including restaurants and bars, smoke-free. On Nov. 7, the citizens of Baytown and Abilene voted to go smoke-free. Houston, Baytown, and Abilene join 11 other Texas cities with comprehensive ordinances that elevate the importance of public health and workplace safety. "There are 47 ordinances in Texas that have some smoke-free components, and 14 of those cities have reached the gold standard of protecting all workers," said James Gray, government relations director for the American Cancer Society in Texas. In the 14 gold standard cities, all employees in the workplace are protected from secondhand smoke, including employees in restaurants and bars. Thirty years ago, there were no public smoking ordinances in Texas. The first ordinances to pass in the state provided separate smoking and nonsmoking areas in restaurant and workplaces and did not address bars. Now the growing trend is toward the comprehensive ordinance that treats all workplaces equally.

Smoking rates have dropped from 42 percent to 22 percent in Texas since the release of the Surgeon General's Report on Smoking in 1964. This past June, U. S. Surgeon General Richard H. Carmona released a report on the harmful effects of secondhand smoke and called on public policy makers to protect the health of workforce employees by enacting comprehensive smoke-free laws. The report concluded that there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke. "Thirty years ago, people could smoke just about anywhere," said Gray. "It was acceptable then to smoke on airplanes, at the movies, even in public schools. Now we know that secondhand smoke causes illnesses and that children and nonsmokers should be protected from the health hazards of involuntary smoking." The 14 Texas cities choosing to go smoke-free include Abilene (ballot vote awaiting city council action), Austin, Baytown, Beaumont, Copperas Cove, El Paso, Fredericksburg, Houston, Laredo, Portland, Robinson, Vernon, Victoria, and Woodway. In the U.S., more than 2,300 communities and 17 states now have smoke-free laws. Ohio and Arizona also voted Nov. 7 to go smoke-free. Hawaii's state law becomes effective Nov. 16. It is estimated that secondhand smoke causes 35,000 to 45,000 deaths each year from heart disease and 3,000 more deaths from lung cancer

among nonsmokers. More than 564,000 Americans will die from cancer this year, and 30 percent of those deaths will be caused by tobacco.

In Texas, almost 11,000 people are expected to die from lung cancer in 2006. All diseases combined, tobacco-related deaths amount to about 27,000 Texans a year - or 500 Texans every week.

Reductions in smoking account for about 40 percent of the decrease in cancer death rates among men since 1991. However, lung cancer is still the leading cause of cancer death in both men and women, claiming the lives of an estimated 162,460 Americans - including almost 11,000 Texans

- this year. In the U.S., tobacco use is responsible for nearly one in five deaths, or approximately 435,000 lives, annually. About 27,000 Texans will die of tobacco-related illnesses this year - amounting to almost 500 deaths every week. Smokers who want to quit are urged to call the American Cancer Society's Quitline(r), a clinically proven, free telephone-based counseling program, at 1-800-ACS-2345, or to log on to www.cancer.org/smokeout, to embark on a personal plan to quit. The American Cancer Society is dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem by saving lives, diminishing suffering and preventing cancer through research, education, advocacy and service. Founded in 1913 and with national headquarters in Atlanta, the Society has 13 regional Divisions and local offices in 3,400 communities, involving millions of volunteers across the United States. For more information anytime, call toll free 1-800-ACS-2345 or visit www.cancer.org.

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