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**Contact:** Gary Sky 303-846-6245

## **Tri-County Health Department Offers FREE Nicotine Patches for the Great American Smokeout**

Thursday, November 20, is the 33rd annual Great American Smokeout. The nationwide event encourages smokers to quit for one day, since quitting for just one day often helps people to commit to a long-term plan to quit for good.

Tri-County Health Department encourages people who smoke to choose the Great American Smokeout on November 20 as their quit date, and are offering FREE nicotine patches through the Colorado QuitLine at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669). Statistics show that tobacco users are seven times more likely to quit successfully with the QuitLine than trying it on their own.

Eligible participants receive free support and advice from an experienced counselor, a personalized quit plan, self-help materials, and a free four-week supply of nicotine patches. The patches have a retail value of \$150. Participants who stay with the program after four weeks are eligible to receive an additional four-week supply, if needed. Callers must be at least 18 years of age, and the free service is available to all Colorado residents in English and Spanish, seven days a week.

“A recent study in the New England Journal of Medicine found that social networks are helpful in quitting smoking,” states Richard L. Vogt, MD, Executive Director of Tri-County Health Department. “People are most likely to quit smoking when they have the support of their friends, family, and coworkers.”

Quitting smoking is crucial, because tobacco use is the single largest preventable cause of disease and premature death in the United States. Half of all Americans who smoke will die from smoking-related diseases. Smoking is directly responsible for most cases of lung cancer, chronic bronchitis and emphysema, and it is a major factor in coronary heart disease and stroke.

Each year, smoking accounts for an estimated 438,000 premature deaths—including 38,000 deaths among nonsmokers because of secondhand smoke.

Tobacco use is also Colorado’s leading cause of preventable death, responsible for more than 4,200 deaths annually. More Coloradans die from smoking each year than AIDS, drug and alcohol

abuse, homicide, suicide and car accidents *combined*. With approximately 130,000 smokers developing smoking-related illnesses each year, annual healthcare costs in Colorado directly related to tobacco use exceed \$1 billion, and taxpayers pay much of that cost.

For more information on tobacco cessation programs, visit [www.tchd.org/tobacco.html](http://www.tchd.org/tobacco.html) or [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org).

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