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Restaurants Urged to Support Great American Smokeout

The Oak Park Department of Public Health, in cooperation with the American Cancer Society, is encouraging restaurants to go smoke-free on Nov. 15 for the Great American Smokeout, a day set aside to help smokers quit cigarettes for at least one day in hopes they will quit forever.

"This is a great opportunity for restaurants in our community to show their support for their customers who are trying to quit smoking by providing them a healthy, smoke-free environment for at least one day," said Health Director Georgeen Polyak, who noted that more people quit smoking on this day than any other day of the year.

Oak Parkers seeking a smoke-free eating environment have plenty of choices, according to Polyak, since more than 50 Village restaurants and food service facilities are enrolled in the Illinois Smoke-Free Restaurant Recognition Program. Started by the state Department of Public Health, the program is intended to help reduce the impact on both restaurant patrons and workers of second-hand smoke, the third leading cause of preventable death in this country.

Today, an estimated 47 million U.S. adults smoke, even though tobacco use can cause cancer, heart disease and respiratory disease, with one in five smoking-related illness ending in death. Fortunately, the past 25 years have seen tremendous strides in reversing attitudes towards smoking, understanding the addiction, and learning how to help people quit, according to Dr. Polyak.

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“If you are a smoker and are ready to quit, you should know you’re not alone,” she said. “The American Cancer Society and the Oak Park Department of Public Health offer a variety of progressive, science-based resources that can increase your chances of quitting successfully.”

For information on programs to help quit smoking, or a list of smoke-free restaurants in Oak Park, call the Health Department at 708.358.5480, or email health@vil.oak-park.il.us.

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