

Annual smokeout takes place today

By Stephanie Holland
Emerald Contributor

Smokers across America will try to extinguish their flames today during the 11th annual Great American Smokeout.

Started in 1974 by Lynn R. Smith, editor of the Monticello (Minn.) Times, the smokeout originated as a day set aside for not smoking. D-Day (for "Don't" smoke) spread throughout Minnesota and traveled west in 1976 to California, where it became the Great American Smokeout. A year later the American Cancer Society (ACS) adopted it as a national program.

The "GAS" encourages people, in a light-hearted way, to quit smoking for 24 hours.

"We're not trying to harass the smokers. We understand that smoking is an addiction," said Wynn Fischer, executive director of Lane County's ACS.

Fischer said the ACS attempts to "heighten the community's awareness" by providing ideas and information to organizations interested in helping smokers quit.

The Oregon Student Association for the Advancement of Health Education (OSAAHE) is one such organization. Members from OSAAHE were at the EMU this week encouraging people to "adopt a smoker."

To adopt a smoker, a person signs a contract and agrees to help a friend who is trying to quit. Adoptions will continue today.

In addition, OSAAHE will hold a drawing today in the EMU. From 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., smokers can turn in their

cigarette packs, labeled with their names and phone numbers, and have chances to win prizes such as video rentals, dinners for two, pizzas and frozen yogurt.

Last year the smokeout drew little attention at the University — something this year's organizers want to change.

"We really want people to get involved in the smokeout. We're hoping that the turnout will be better this year," OSAAHE member Clarissa Gutierrez said.

Although the smokeout is an upbeat, casual way to help smokers quit, the facts behind the annual event are serious.

According to the American

Cancer Society, cigarette smoking is responsible for 83 percent of lung cancer cases and 30 percent of all cancer deaths, and is related to 320,000 deaths a year.

Some studies find sidestream smoke, inhaled indirectly from burning cigarettes, almost as dangerous as mainstream smoke, inhaled directly by smokers. People exposed to sidestream smoke inhale carbon monoxide, nicotine and other substances as smokers do, but in smaller amounts.

According to ACS literature, some substances, such as tar and nicotine, are found in greater concentration in sidestream smoke than in mainstream smoke.

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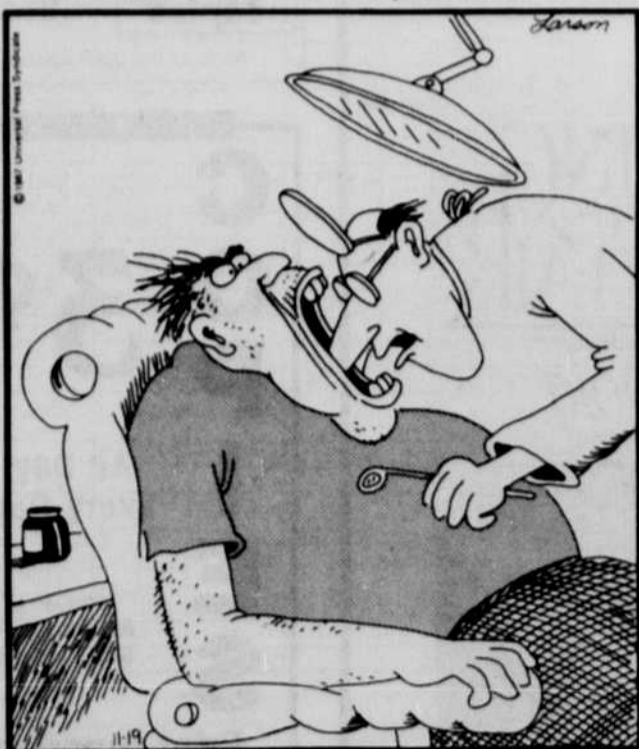
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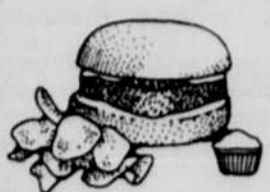
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