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EVERY TRY COUNTS CAMPAIGN ASKS SMOKERS TO QUIT TODAY, AND TOMORROW Vermont Health Department Begins New Campaign on 31st Great American Smokeout

Burlington, VT – The Vermont Department of Health is observing the American Cancer Society's 31st annual Great American Smokeout on November 15 with a clear message of support to smokers – Every Try Counts. The Health Department has taken the 24-hour Great American Smokeout and highlighted a series of fun, interactive tools that take five minutes or less to complete, which is the amount of time that the average cigarette craving lasts.

Statistics show that each year more than half (52.7%) of adult smokers make at least one serious attempt to stop smoking, and each attempt brings them one step closer to smoke-free success. Smokers double their chances of success by taking advantage of support including the Vermont QuitLine (1.800.QUIT.NOW), local hospital-based Ready, Set...STOP programs, or online at VermontQuitnet.com.

"During the Great American Smokeout, we're asking all Vermont smokers to quit, and we're also telling them that every attempt to quit brings them one step closer to tobacco-free living," said Health Commissioner Sharon Moffatt, RN, MSN. "With so many Vermont lives lost to smoking-related illnesses, not to mention the \$183 million spent annually on smoking-related illnesses, we're celebrating every quit attempt."

Since 1999, smoking prevalence for adults in Vermont has dropped from 21.6 to 18 percent in 2006. This significant drop represents lives not lost to smoking and reduced healthcare spending, but still falls short of the Health Department's long-standing goal of reducing the adult smoking rate to 11% by 2010. Most of the remaining 18 percent started smoking at a young age and have tried to quit in the past, but need help to be successful long-term.

The Vermont Department of Health's Every Try Counts theme aims to reach smokers when and where they are most likely to smoke during their busy days. That including the morning rush hour, a quick stop at a local convenience store to buy necessities, and local watering holes. The Health Department, realizing the challenges of reaching into these busy lives, has developed some innovative programs that encourage smokers to try to quit again.

Most Americans own mobile phones, so the Health Department is using the ever-present technology to reach smokers by sponsoring a daily contest to win a free two-week supply of nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) patches or lozenges. Cell phone users simply enter the contest by sending the text message "NRT" to 247365 or by logging on to www.tobaccostories.org. Entrants and visitors to the site also will be able to opt in to receiving weekly quit tips on their phones, and one winner will be chosen daily through January 2008.

When smokers stop at gas stations around the state, they'll see ads on the top of gas pumps noting that Every Try Counts and encouraging them to enter the mobile phone contest. When they enter the convenience store to pick up a few items, they'll see campaign posters and coffee cup sleeves printed with the "A Craving Only Lasts 5 Minutes" message that encourages them to pass the five minutes by calling a friend or singing along with the radio, instead of lighting up.

In local watering holes, Every Try Counts coasters offer two games – bouncing a coin onto the coaster to hit the bull's eye, and "I Spy" questions – that will help the five-minute cigarette crave pass quickly.

Through its community coalition and hospital-based cessation program partners, the Health Department is distributing "Distraction Putty." The putty keeps a smoker's hands busy for five minutes or more, whether in a meeting or watching TV, to help beat the craving to smoke. Bookmark-sized cards for smokers feature tips on how to spend a healthy five minutes, from updating the electronic phone book in a cell phone to peeling an orange to making a mental list of top 10 favorite songs or movies.

"Smokers understand and appreciate the obvious health risks associated with smoking, but they also need help and support to get through the tough times of their days," said Sheri Lynn, tobacco control chief for the Vermont Department of Health. "We hope the tools we've developed, available when and where smokers need them most, will lead to an increase in the use of support services like the Vermont QuitLine, local hospital coaches and Vermont QuitNet followed by the ultimate success – fewer Vermonters who smoke."

For more information, call the Vermont QuitLine at 1-800.QUIT.NOW (784-8669), contact the local hospital's coach, or visit www.TobaccoStories.com.