FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: MARY WADE TRIPPLETT, PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER
MONONGALIA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
TELEPHONE: 304-598-5152  MARYWADE.TRIPPLETT@WV.GOV

QUIT SMOKING FOR A DAY—OR A LIFETIME—DURING THURSDAY’S GREAT AMERICAN SMOKEOUT

MORGANTOWN, WV – (NOVEMBER 15, 2017)

If you can quit for a day, you can quit for a lifetime. That’s the idea behind the Great American Smokeout, which takes place Thursday, Nov. 16.

Created by the American Cancer Society in the 1970s, the Great American Smokeout provides encouragement and tools to help people quit smoking.

In West Virginia, more than a quarter of the population—25.7 percent—smoked in 2015. That put West Virginia in the highest category of American smokers—23.7 percent to 27.4 percent—along with only Kentucky and Arkansas. That is compared to 15.1 percent in the United States. The Great American Smokeout offers tools and advice to help people quit smoking. The first step is to make the decision to quit smoking, set a date and create a plan.

Staff at the MCHD Dentistry, the dental office at the Monongalia County Health Department, helps patients quit smoking by referring them to the West Virginia Tobacco Quitline, 1-800-QUIT-NOW. There are also medications and smoking cessation groups that can provide help.

Nicotine replacement therapy, for instance, can help decrease the painful withdrawal symptoms that come with quitting smoking without the other harmful chemicals that are in cigarettes. There are also prescription drugs that can help.

People who are significantly dependent on nicotine might want to consider at least one or both of these methods to help them quit smoking. Significantly dependent smokers exhibit at least some of these habits: smoking more than one pack a day, smoking within five minutes of waking up, smoking even while sick, waking up at night to smoke and smoking to ease the symptoms of withdrawal.
The Great American Smokeout also encourages smokers to take advantage of smoking cessation support that can be accessed through telephone hotlines, in-person and online support groups, counseling, friends and family members and reading materials.

The benefits of quitting smoking begin almost immediately and increase over time. Twenty minutes after quitting, your heart and blood pressure drop. Twelve hours after quitting, the carbon monoxide level in your blood drops to normal. Forty-eight hours later, your ability to smell and taste begin to improve. Two weeks to three months after quitting, your circulation improves and your lung function increases.

One to nine months after quitting, coughing and shortness of breath decrease. Tiny hair-like structures that move mucus out of the lungs called cilia start to regain normal function in your lungs, increasing their ability to handle mucus, clean the lungs and reduce the risk of infection. One year after quitting, the excess risk of coronary heart disease is half that of someone who still smokes. Your heart attack risk drops dramatically.

Five years after quitting, your risk of cancers of the mouth, throat, esophagus and bladder is cut in half. Cervical cancer risk falls to that of a non-smoker. Your stroke risk can fall to that of a non-smoker after two to five years. Ten years after quitting, your risk of dying of lung cancer is about half that of a person who is still smoking. Your risk of cancer of the larynx and pancreas decreases. And 15 years after quitting, your risk of coronary heart disease is that of a non-smoker’s.

Life expectancy for smokers is at least 10 years shorter than that of non-smokers. Quitting smoking before the age of 40 reduces the risk of dying from smoking-related disease by about 90 percent.

So take the plunge and try to quit smoking for a day, a week or the rest of your life. For more tips and information on how to quit smoking, check out websites for the Coalition for a Tobacco-Free West Virginia at tobacco-free-wv.com and the Great American Smokeout at cancer.org/healthy/stay-away-from-tobacco/great-american-smokeout.html.