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What's in Your Pocket? Feb. 15-21 is "Through With Chew" Week

Throughout the state of Arizona when you see the distinctive round worn area of a jean pocket it's chew. Snuff, chew, spit... it has many names. Arizonans chew tobacco at a rate of two percent. That means more than 88,000 Arizonans are smokeless tobacco users.*

Tobacco companies are developing more types of chewing tobacco products. In response to both declining cigarette sales and tougher smoke-free laws around the country, tobacco companies are offering many new addictive alternatives. They're discreet, flavorful and come in cute tin boxes with names like "citrus" and "spice." Some you don't even have to spit. You just swallow the juice! And, some you don't even have to chew... you can stick a packet between your toes and get a nicotine fix!

It's important to spread the message that smokeless tobacco doesn't mean harmless tobacco. This Feb. 15-21 is "Through With Chew" Week. This is a national educational awareness week designed to get people talking about chew tobacco use and increase awareness of the negative health effects of using chew.

"Tobacco kills, no matter if it's a cigarette, a cigar, a chew or snuff, or a roll-your-own," says Stephen S. Michael, MS, Director of the Arizona Smokers' Helpline (ASHLine). The Arizona Smokers' Helpline isn't just for smokers. ASHLine offers free, personalized, quit support to all tobacco users. To quit chew, or any tobacco product, call 1-800-55-66-222 or visit www.ashline.org.

Maricopa County Board of Supervisor Andrew Kunasek chewed tobacco for 20 years. "Don't kid yourself if you don't think it's addictive," he says. "If I can quit anyone can. I quit more than ten years ago and I celebrate daily.

Take advantage of the great programs the state and county have to offer to help you quit. There will never be a better time to quit."

Interviews are available with quit professionals and former Arizona chewers including but not limited to the following. To schedule please call Laurie Thomas 480-540-6050.

About Supervisor Kunasek

Maricopa County Board of Supervisor, Andrew Kunasek (limited interviews available). Supervisor Kunasek chewed tobacco for 20 years. He has become an outspoken advocate for tobacco-free living.

About Stephen Michael

Stephen S. Michael, MS, Director of the Arizona Smokers' Helpline (ASHLine) at the University of Arizona Zuckerman College of Public Health. The Arizona Smokers' Helpline is funded by the Arizona Department of Health Services Bureau of Tobacco Education and Prevention and offers free assistance to Arizonans statewide who are trying to quit tobacco use. Mr. Michael holds a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling, with a focus in Substance Abuse, and has over 20 years of experience in behavioral health settings. He is recognized as an authority on tobacco quitlines.

About Carolyn Holman

Carolyn Holman, R.D.H. (Registered Dental Hygienist)
Maricopa County Office of Oral Health

About ASHLine

The Arizona Smokers' Helpline offers effective, research-based tobacco use cessation services to Arizona residents through personalized telephone coaching services in English and Spanish. ASHLine will be launching a new online tobacco cessation resource this month! This addition to www.ashline.org will feature a series of modules that allow clients to develop their quit plan. Clients will be able to schedule periodic email or text reminders prompting them to return to the website to review their quit plan. Online assessments and activities will help clients review and revise their quit plan to help them stay quit. ASHLine is sponsored by the Arizona Department of Health Services Bureau of Tobacco Education and Prevention (ADHS BTEP). 1-800-55-66-222

About "Through With Chew" Week

Through With Chew Week was established in 1989 by the American Academy of Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery, Inc. It is held the third week of February each year to decrease spit tobacco use and bring awareness to the negative effects of chewing tobacco products.

About the Arizona Department of Health Services Bureau of Tobacco Education and Prevention (ADHS BTEP)

ADHS BTEP is the tobacco prevention, education and cessation program for the state of Arizona and is funded by the voter approved tax on the sale of tobacco products which began in 1995. Our mission is to reduce disease, disability and death related to the use of tobacco. Tobacco control involves comprehensive, innovative and expansive reach to reduce the burden of tobacco use. All 15 Arizona counties are integrally involved in education and prevention activities statewide.

*based on adult population estimates; <http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco>

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