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**For the Week of November 17, 2009**

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We did it! In just two days—Nov. 19—Lee Memorial Health System will officially be tobacco free! That means beginning at midnight, no tobacco products may be used on our properties, owned or leased.

We have come a long way since March, when our Board of Directors officially signed the documents that sent us down this path of becoming a tobacco free organization.

We started out with an estimated 20 percent of our workforce using tobacco products, or about 2,000 employees. To date, more than 400 employees have said “good-bye” to tobacco! That is a fantastic achievement and something we should all celebrate!

We know that it will be a struggle in the coming months to adjust to our new status as a tobacco free health system, as members of our team, as well as patients and visitors, adjust their routines. We understand that tobacco use is an addiction, and our System will continue to provide support programs for those who want to quit or need some assistance getting through the work day.

When we go tobacco free on Thursday—the day of the Great American Smokeout—we will not do it alone. Lehigh Regional Medical Center, Physicians Regional Healthcare System and NCH Health Care System are also going tobacco free, meaning all health systems in Charlotte, Collier and Lee counties will no longer permit tobacco use on their premises. Many other local businesses have jumped on board, too.

A large number of our team members have worked tirelessly during the past several months to prepare our health system for the “big day.” I’d like to send a heartfelt “thank you” to our entire team, especially Jon Cecil, who is spearheading the project; project co-chairs Brad Pollins and Joan Carroll; and every member of the committee who has worked to make this happen.

Becoming a tobacco free organization is a very significant step for our organization, as we continue to strive to improve the health status of the citizens of Southwest Florida. We have become leaders in the fight against tobacco use! Thanks for your understanding and support.

Well done!

Peace,



Jim Nathan

President, Lee Memorial Health System