



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Maricopa Community Colleges Formally Launch BreatheEasy, Pledge to Help Employees, Students Quit Tobacco**

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TEMPE, AZ – As part of a celebration of the Great American Smokeout, the Maricopa County Community College District today formally launched Maricopa BreatheEasy, a healthy-living initiative that will result in smoke free and tobacco free properties on July 1, 2012. On that date, the 10 Maricopa Community Colleges will join more than 500 other colleges and universities that have become smoke free, tobacco-free, or both.

As an educational institution, it's our job to lead the way for the members of our community," said Chancellor Rufus Glasper. "We recognize that making our properties smoke free and tobacco free will mean that some employees and students will have to change their habits, and we want to help them do so." Among other things, the District will provide a robust schedule of smoking cessation programs and has asked school stores to offer nicotine gum and lozenges for sale.

Dr. Glasper said the District is announcing the policy change well in advance of its implementation to give students and employees who use tobacco products plenty of time to decide how to adjust to this change. On July 1, 2012, employees and students who continue to use tobacco will have the choice of not using it on District property, or taking breaks off-property.

Dr. Glasper gave Maricopa students and employees a preview of BreatheEasy in a video announcement Oct. 17. Since then, the campaign has been the topic of extensive – and at times heated – discussion across the Maricopa community.

Today's launch is being held in conjunction with the 36<sup>th</sup> annual Great American Smokeout, a national event sponsored in part by the American Cancer Society. It's a time when smokers and other tobacco users are encouraged to use the day to create a plan to quit the habit, or to plan ahead and begin their tobacco-free life that day. The day is based on the fact that tobacco is the single largest preventable cause of disease and premature death in the United States.

Because more than half the smokers in the country have tried to quit for at least a day, the Cancer Society and other supporters publicize programs and resources that can help smokers kick the habit. All the Maricopa Community Colleges will hold events marking the Great American Smokeout, some of which will

encourage students and employees to pledge to quit their tobacco habits. Some will be led by students from campus chapters of IGNITE (Influence, Guide, Network for Inter-Collegiate Tobacco Education), a program that helps college students practice advocacy and integrate tobacco control messages into their projects and activities. The district also announced that nicotine gum and lozenges will be available for sale at campus bookstores to help students, employees and visitors who are fighting nicotine cravings.

As part of today's announcement, the District unveiled new web pages that contain information on tobacco use and smoking cessation for employees and students. Resources for students will be found on a variety of locations on the websites of the individual colleges, while those for employees and interested members of the community can be found at [www.breatheeasy.maricopa.edu](http://www.breatheeasy.maricopa.edu) .

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The Maricopa County Community College District is one of the largest community college districts in the nation. It includes 10 colleges – Chandler-Gilbert Community College, Estrella Mountain Community College, GateWay Community College, Glendale Community College, Mesa Community College, Paradise Valley Community College, Phoenix College, Rio Salado College, Scottsdale Community College and South Mountain Community College. The District also includes the Maricopa Skill Center, Southwest Skill Center, several satellite campuses and business/industry; technical and customized training institutes.