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**THE GREAT AMERICAN SMOKEOUT 2005:
CA DENTAL HYGIENISTS PLAY CRITICAL ROLE IN TOBACCO FIGHT**

Campaign Effective in Referring 24,000 Californians to Anti-Smoking Programs

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif. (Nov. 15, 2005) – On the eve of this week's Great American Smokeout, the California Dental Hygienists' Association (www.cdha.org) today unveiled preliminary results of an innovative and effective program established by the profession to decrease tobacco use in the state.

This year's Great American Smokeout is Nov. 17; the annual event, started by the American Cancer Society, is aimed at getting people to stop smoking.

CDHA is using the event to highlight its ongoing program – the New California Gold Rush Campaign – in which dental hygienists across the state are asking their patients about tobacco use, advising those who are tobacco users to quit and referring them to seek help via a gold card containing the number to the California Smokers' Helpline: 1-800-NO-BUTTS. More than 24,000 gold cards were distributed in one year.

"This important public health effort helps underscore that dental hygienists do much more than clean teeth," said Lin Sarfaraz, RDH, CDHA's president. "Dental hygiene visits help save lives by helping smokers quit. There are numerous cases in which dental hygienists have saved lives by performing oral cancer screening and through early detection of cancer and other diseases that threaten children, seniors and older adults."

According to the latest available statistics from the Surgeon General smoking has cost over \$157 billion dollars in healthcare disease and premature deaths. There are an estimated 1.4 million smokers in the California. These dire facts motivated hundreds of California dental hygienists last year to launch the New California Gold Rush campaign to proactively help smokers quit. The program is a partnership involving both the California Smokers' Helpline and the Smoking Cessation Leadership Center.

- The goal was to have every dental hygienist refer at least one smoker/spit tobacco user to the California Smokers' Helpline 1-800-NO-BUTTS
- According to science if a smoker/spit tobacco user calls the helpline they have a 50% chance of quitting.
- Dental Hygienists continue to play a pivotal role in helping smokers quit by referring tobacco users to toll-free telephone quit lines

"This program is another example of our commitment to expand access to oral and other health care," said Sarfaraz.

The campaign is a partnership between CDHA, the California Smokers' Helpline and the Smoking Cessation Leadership Center.

CDHA, which is celebrating its 20th year as the official voice of the profession in California, is continuing its advocacy in Sacramento for expanded access to care. For years, CDHA has supported legislation and other public policies intended to provide greater autonomy and the independence necessary for dental hygienists to provide care to those who need it most – ethnic minorities, children, seniors and low-income populations.

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The California Dental Hygienists' Association (CDHA) is the authoritative voice of the state's dental hygiene profession. While registered dental hygienists have worked in the state for nearly a century, CDHA was established 20 years ago when two regional associations merged to form a unified professional group. CDHA represents thousands of dental hygienists throughout the state and is dedicated to expanding opportunities for the profession and access to care for all Californians.

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