American Cancer Society marks 50 years of smokeout event

Tom Latek
Kentucky Today

FRANKFORT, Ky. (KT) – On Thursday, November 19th, the American Cancer Society (ACS) marks its 50th annual Great American Smokeout, offering an opportunity to celebrate five decades of progress against tobacco while confronting the work that still needs to be done.

Smoking rates have declined dramatically over the past 50 years, saving millions of lives nationwide. That progress, however, is not guaranteed. The policies and public health programs that helped reduce tobacco use are facing new challenges, while cigarettes are once again being portrayed as stylish, nostalgic and culturally relevant in entertainment and on social media.

A new report from the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN), titled The Toxic Smoking Aesthetic, examines cigarette-related content on TikTok and Instagram. It finds that a toxic smoking aesthetic is making cigarettes seem appealing to a new generation of young women and girls, while concealing the harms.

ACS CAN has also raised concerns about the erosion of tobacco control infrastructure, the continued authorization of new flavored tobacco products by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the re-glamorization of tobacco across television, movies and online content.

"As we mark 50 years of the Great American Smokeout, we should be celebrating how far we've come while recognizing that we cannot take this progress for granted," said Doug Hogan, ACS CAN government relations director. "We need sustained investment in tobacco prevention and cessation, along with science-based policies that protect our communities and future generations."

Across Kentucky, tobacco use is still the leading preventable cause of disease and death, and smoking is linked to at least 12 types of cancers, including lung, liver and colorectal cancers. Each year, more than 8,900 Kentuckians die from a smoking-related disease.

"The Great American Smokeout is not just an opportunity for people who use tobacco to set a plan to quit. It's also a clear wake-up call for lawmakers to say it's time for Kentucky to stand up to Big Tobacco," said Hogan. "For too long, Kentucky has allowed the tobacco industry to addict people to deadly, cancer-causing products. It's time to say, 'enough is enough.' Our residents deserve better."

Free resources on quitting tobacco can be found through the American Cancer Society's cessation program, Empowered to Quit or at Quit Now Kentucky.

Comer, saying 'serving this state is a calling,' announces bid for governor of Kentucky

Mark Maynard
Kentucky Today

Republican U.S. Rep James Comer put the speculation to rest about his political future and announced his bid to run for governor of Kentucky in 2027.

Comer made it official on Monday night on his campaign website where he fielded questions from listeners. Earlier in the day he filed a spending intent for a campaign for the governor of Kentucky, according to the Kentucky Registry of Election Finance.

Comer, whose family has been in Kentucky for seven generations, has long been expected to make the run for governor. This will be his second bid at the governor's seat but this time he will be the leading Republican candidate. Comer previously ran for governor in 2015, losing the GOP primary to future Gov. Matt Bevin by 83 votes.

"Serving this state is a calling for me," Comer said. "The government doesn't have all the answers, but we have a responsibility is to solve problems and lift people up when we can. With your support, we can restore hope and create prosperity across Kentucky. I believe a governor should listen and act."

Comer, 54, won his bid for reelection as the representative of Kentucky's 1st Congressional District in November's general election. He has been a member of the House of Representatives since 2016.

While in Washington, he was the chair of the powerful House Oversight Committee since 2023 but announced this year he was not seeking another term in that role.

Comer joins Democrats Jacqueline Coleman and Rocky Adkins as candidates who have entered the Kentucky gubernatorial race to replace Gov. Andy Beshear, who is term-limited and considering a run for President after eight years as the state's governor.

Another potential Republican contender, Secretary of State Michael Adams, said during this year's Fancy Farm picnic that he would not run for governor, a move many saw as clearing the path for Comer to launch a gubernatorial bid.

Kentucky's primary election is scheduled for May 18, 2027.

Comer knows his way around Frankfort, too. He served in the Kentucky House of Representatives for 11 years and as the agriculture commissioner of Kentucky for four years.

"My goal in Kentucky is to get the income tax down to zero," Comer said, saying he would work with the GOP-led General Assembly to make that happen."

Comer said for the past six months he has traveled the state and talked to citizens in communities both urban and rural who are struggling to provide basic services and maintain infrastructure.

Family was another reason for Comer's decision. His oldest daughter, Reagan, is a senior at the University of Kentucky and son Harlan just started at the University of Pikeville. Their youngest daughter, Aniston, is a sophomore at Western Hills High School.

Comer opened the line for questions and Agriculture Commissioner Jonathan Shell and State Senator Robin Webb gave their support for him.

"I consider you to be one of my best friends in the world," Shell said. "I cannot wait for this election next year to be over with, and we can call you governor of Kentucky."

Looking back to Nov. 19, 2018

Written by Jonathan Wright

The following information was entered into the Nov. 19, 2018, edition of The Ledger Independent:

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YMCA's Turkey Trot 5k returns

Running shoes and turkey hats were evident Saturday morning as participants for the second annual Turkey Trot 5k, hosted by the Maysville YMCA, made their way through their trek.

Jessica Workman, senior director for the YMCA, said participants take the 5k along the Maple Leaf Road walking trail while wearing turkey-themed costumes.

"It's kind of a fun run in the fall with costumes and things like that — to go down this trail and use our trail that we have because we feel fortunate that we have it," Workman said.

Workman said the trail had runners go from the YMCA to the intersection of Kentucky 9 AA Highway and back, which equates to 3.1 miles — just enough for a 5k. Walkers were also welcome to take a trail totaling two miles.

Proceeds from the trot go toward the YMCA's sustaining campaign, which helps those who cannot afford memberships and daycare services, which the facility provides. As for the idea to have people run around town looking like turkeys, Workman said she had a little inspiration.

"We kinda stole it from another YMCA," she said in good humor. "They had an idea of Turkey Trot, and the (Maple Leaf) trail came along at the same time, so we decided to go on and try to see what we could do and if it would work. It did, and we rolled with it."

Along with benefiting the YMCA, participants are also rewarded during the trot, provided they bring their A-game. Workman said the male and female winners of the 5k both receive a frozen turkey, while those with the best turkey costumes receive a $15 Tumbleweed gift card.

Public reception of the trot after only two years has been all around positive, Workman said. Currently, the YMCA has raised around $3,500 in sponsorships and registrations combined.

"It was pretty good last year, and we had terrible weather, and this year everyone's excited about it," Workman said. "Weather, of course, plays a part as to whether people come out or not, but it's a pretty good crowd."

Providing services like daycare, after-school programs and even summer camps, the YMCA clearly has some use among parents who work, though some may not be able to afford the facility's membership to access these services.

Workman said she would like to see the Turkey Trot grow as the years progress so that more money can be raised to better help the community.

"I think last year, and this is shocking, but we gave out $120,000 worth of memberships, child care, and we only raised right at $35,000, so that's a huge deal," she said. "So the more that we can raise the more that we can do that. We're hoping to get that bigger, there's obviously a need in the community."

Helping to make the YMCA more accessible to the community, Workman believes there is worth to it.

"I think it's very important," she said. "When you see the kids and families and you talk to them, and see they're working hard and trying to pay and trying to do things, it's just difficult. We're glad we can help — and that what differentiates the 'Y' from other places, we can do that."



Photo by Terry Prather

Left: Runners move along Maple Leaf Road Saturday morning during the Limestone Family YMCA's annual Turkey Trot. Top: Gabriel Sammons, age 10, ran, finishing in second place. Middle: Eleanor and Hope Comer participated in the walking division of the Turkey Trot. Bottom: Runners began the race near the entrance to the YMCA near U.S. 62.

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Story ideas, news tips, etc., should be called in to the newsroom between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. Call 564-9091.

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Circulation Customer Service:
Monday-Friday 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

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