



***NOTE TO MEDIA:** Nearly a dozen "Success Stories" and downloadable photos for different regions of New York State are available at the Quitline's Online News Room: <https://nysmokefree.com/newsroom>. Inspirational New Yorkers became nicotine-free in 2020 for a variety of reasons: COVID-19 concerns, the birth of a child, improved health, battling cancer and much more. Please reach out to the Quitline any time, any day, for supplemental interviews to enhance your coverage of New Year's resolutions and stories of hope heading into 2021.*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact

Tony Astran, MPA, APR, TTS
New York State Smokers' Quitline
716-982-2088 (cell)
anthony.astran@roswellpark.org

TWO SYRACUSE-AREA WOMEN PROVIDE INSPIRATION TO BECOME TOBACCO-FREE IN 2021

Despite the challenges of 2020, Susan E. and Leanna K. resiliently tackled addictions to smoking with support from the New York State Smokers' Quitline

SYRACUSE, N.Y. – Dec. 31, 2020 – Susan E. of North Syracuse, N.Y. and Leanna K. of downtown Syracuse do not know each other but have much in common. Besides being Central New Yorkers, both recently battled breast cancer and became tobacco-free this past July with support from the New York State Smokers' Quitline (Quitline).

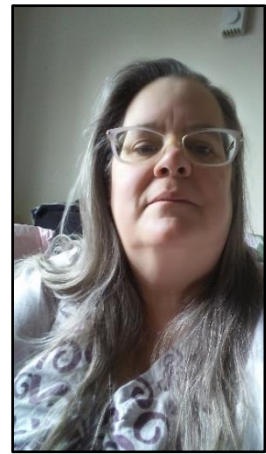


Susan, 66 (*pictured at left*), had her first cigarette more than 50 years ago as a teenager. She had tried becoming tobacco-free multiple times throughout her life, but a recent diagnosis of breast cancer provided the impetus to quit smoking for good.

"I also quit for my grandson," Susan said. "He turned 11 in July, and I want to be around for his 21st birthday. He had recently asked me a question I could not answer: 'Why do you smoke cigarettes if you know they're harmful?'"

Likewise, Leanna (*pictured at right*) started smoking as a teenager and battled breast cancer in 2019. Now age 55, she is cancer-free and intends to stay that way by maintaining a tobacco-free lifestyle.

"I had quit smoking for nearly 20 years but relapsed three or four years ago due to stress," Leanna said. "I approached my 55th birthday and wasn't proud that I was once again a smoker, especially after battling breast cancer. The Quit Coaches at the Quitline helped me succeed – they motivated me and said, 'You can do this.'"



Both Susan and Leanna received free nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) from the Quitline via mail in the form of patches and gum. The medication helped curb cravings, and personalized quit-plans created in consultation with the Quit Coaches helped each navigate the behavioral and psychological aspects of nicotine dependence.

Susan is currently enjoying retired life in DeLand, Fla. during the colder months. In addition to recently taking up yoga and acupuncture, she adopted a dog in October and is now able to take it for longer-distance walks. "For anyone looking to become tobacco-free, I would say, 'Have a reason why, and keep trying – eventually you'll get it right,'" Susan said. "My breathing has dramatically improved, and I feel great. I don't miss smoking at all."

Leanna keeps a list posted on her refrigerator with the reasons she chose to become tobacco-free. She looks at it every day to give herself strength and pride. "I have asthma, and I'm so grateful I no longer have a bad cough," Leanna added. "Being tobacco-free is really helping my budget, too. The free patches and gum were especially a godsend, as my particular insurance plan wouldn't have covered them."

The Quitline encourages all tobacco and vape-product users to make 2021 their best year ever by becoming nicotine-free, especially in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. According to the CDC, those who smoke [suffer more severe effects](#) if infected with the coronavirus.

The Quitline recommends tobacco and vape-product users consult a healthcare professional as part of a nicotine-free journey. Healthcare professionals can provide referrals to the Quitline for free quit-coaching and free NRT such as nicotine patches and nicotine gum or lozenges – and nearly all participants are eligible. The Quitline's Quit Coaches are available seven days a week beginning at 9 a.m. by calling 1-866-NY-QUITS (1-866-697-8487) beginning at 9 a.m. or by visiting www.nysmokefree.com and requesting a call.

About the New York State Smokers' Quitline

The New York State Smokers' Quitline is a service of the New York State Department of Health and based at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center in Buffalo, N.Y. It is one of the first and busiest state quitlines in the nation and has responded to nearly 3 million calls since it began operating in 2000. The Quitline encourages nicotine users to talk with their healthcare professionals and access available Medicaid or health insurance benefits for stop-smoking medications. All New York State residents can call **1-866-NY-QUITS** (1-866-697-8487) for coaching and resources, free of charge, seven days a week beginning at 9 a.m. Visit www.nysmokefree.com for more information.

About Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center

Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center is a community united by the drive to eliminate cancer's grip on humanity by unlocking its secrets through personalized approaches and unleashing the healing power of hope. Founded by Dr. Roswell Park in 1898, it is the only National Cancer Institute-designated comprehensive cancer center in Upstate New York. Learn more at www.roswellpark.org, or contact us at 1-800-ROSWELL (1-800-767-9355) or ASKRoswell@roswellpark.org.

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