



***NOTE TO MEDIA:** Additional "Success Stories" and corresponding photos for different regions of New York State are available to read or download at the New York State Smokers' Quitline's Online News Room: <https://nysmokefree.com/newsroom>. Please reach out to us any time for interviews to enhance your coverage of New Year's resolutions and wellness stories. Tobacco cessation experts are available locally and via Zoom; clients may be available upon request.*

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Media Contact

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

NEARLY ONE YEAR AFTER BECOMING TOBACCO-FREE, LAURA H. IS LIVING HER BEST LIFE AT 56

With assistance from the New York State Smokers' Quitline, Capital Region woman is living proof 'it's never too late' to stop smoking



WEST SAND LAKE, N.Y. – December 31, 2021 – The beginning of a new year is always a popular time to make resolutions for improved wellness. For those who use tobacco products, the New Year provides an opportunity to seek treatment for becoming tobacco-free. The **New York State Smokers' Quitline** (Quitline) understands the challenges involved to stop smoking for good, and reminds all New York State residents free resources are available seven days a week at 1-866-NY-QUITS (1-866-697-8487) and nysmokefree.com.

Laura H. (*pictured*) of West Sand Lake, approximately 10 miles east of Albany in the Capital Region, began using cigarettes at age 12 and soon became a regular smoker for 40 years. She never thought she could quit smoking and did not imagine herself as a non-smoker.

Laura nevertheless tried on many occasions to become tobacco-free but only achieved success for a stretch of six months and another of four weeks. Her primary health clinic, the Capital Region Family Health Center, often referred her to the Quitline for support. In early 2021, Laura contacted the Quitline and worked with Quit Coaches to develop a quit-plan, incorporating the use of nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) in the form of patches and gum. Laura received a free starter supply in the mail but delayed opening the package. She soon, however, received what she said was a “wake-up call” about her future health.

“During a yearly check-up with my doctor, I found out my diabetes diagnosis worsened and learned about potential heart concerns due to family history – both conditions that could be exacerbated due to smoking,” Laura said. “I thought about the many surgeries and suffering my parents went through in their later years, and I didn’t want the rest of my life to be filled with constant medical appointments. It was time to say goodbye to cigarettes forever.”

Laura also wanted to become tobacco-free for her husband and three daughters, who encouraged her to improve her health. Although Laura identified as a smoker, she felt ashamed – especially due to what she calls a “smokers’ prison” of interrupting everyday activities due to cigarette breaks.

“I learned that I wasn’t craving a cigarette, I was just stamping out a nicotine addiction,” she said. “When I spoke with the Quitline’s Quit Coaches, conversations about triggers helped me think about when and where I’d typically want to smoke, such as while driving.”

The nicotine patches helped curb Laura’s cravings early in the quit-process and she soon switched to the gum, which worked even more effectively for her. In addition to receiving support from the Quitline, Laura joined a Facebook support group, read a book on smoking’s psychological effects and downloaded an app to track her overall progress.

“The Quitline helped save my life and my sanity,” Laura said. “I would advise anyone to call them and take advantage of the free (NRT) products, because they’re such a boost. Quitting cold turkey is incredibly difficult. And even with all the appropriate tools and guidance, almost no one is successful after the very first quit-attempt. The important thing is to stick with it and to be aware that your odds get better each time you try.”

Today, at age 56, Laura is enjoying drastically improved health from nearly one year of being tobacco-free. She used to exercise casually but now engages in a daily fitness and nutrition routine. Her occasional trips to Colorado for hiking also feel completely different.

“I have more lung capacity and stamina, which helps me to hike farther and faster without huffing and puffing,” she said. “I used to have so much worry about how my future would be from a health standpoint. It is so freeing to now be able to say, ‘I am a non-smoker.’”

Nearly all New York State adults are eligible to receive a free starter supply of NRT via mail, typically in the form of nicotine patches and often with supplemental nicotine gum or nicotine lozenges. When used appropriately and in combination, NRT products can double or triple the odds of becoming and staying tobacco-free.

The Quitline also recommends all tobacco users – whether they are practicing their first or tenth quit-attempt – to visit the CDC’s “Benefits of Quitting” website at https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/quit_smoking/how_to_quit/benefits/index.htm. This resource offers a thorough compilation of health benefits at any age, regardless of how long or how much one smoked.

The Quitline wishes everyone a happy, healthy and tobacco-free 2022.

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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