

Connecting students to careers, professionals to communities & communities to better health.



AHEC's QUIT TIMES



Spring 2009

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Quit Smoking Now: USF's Employee Assistance Program Collaborates with AHEC to Start an Employee Smoking Cessation Group

By Leila Martini, MPH, MLS

The University of South Florida (USF) Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a service program designed to assist employees with personal, family, or workplace concerns. The EAP professional staff seeks to enhance the emotional functioning of employees and to respond to the needs of faculty and staff through various educational and psychological interventions including assessment, crisis intervention, psychological counseling, substance abuse services, couples

counseling, career counseling, seminars, consultation, and information or referral services.

In partnership with the USF Area Health Education Center (AHEC), the EAP is proud to offer a new smoking cessation program for USF employees. Developed in accordance with CDC Best Practices and the U.S. Public Health Guidelines, the *Quit Smoking Now* curriculum used by EAP is evidence-based

and culturally appropriate.

While supplies last, employees who participate in the *Quit Smoking Now* EAP Program are eligible for a free two-week supply of over-the-counter nicotine replacement therapy (i.e. patch, gum, or lozenges). Employees who attend the group are given a voucher which is redeemable at the CVS Pharmacy located at the corner of Fowler and Bruce B. Downs.

For more information about the EAP *Quit Smoking Now* Program, please visit the EAP website at: <http://usfweb2.usf.edu/COUNSEL/casa/quitnow/index.html>

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What can I expect?

- Tobacco Education
- Benefits to Quitting
- Coping Skills
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- External Resources

What services are offered?

- Individualized Assessment
- Smoking Cessation Groups
- Relapse Prevention Groups
- Carbon Monoxide Monitoring

Referrals

- Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT)*
- Medication*
- Personal Training*

*fees may be associated with these services

Who is eligible?

- Students
- Administration
- Faculty
- Staff
- OPS Employees

How much does it cost?

There is NO cost for the "Quit Smoking Now" program

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Faculty & Staff: 813.974.5469



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AHEC's Quit Times is published biannually for members of the healthcare community serving our nine counties: Charlotte, Citrus, DeSoto, Hernando, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas, and Sarasota.

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Quitting: The Hardest, Most Important Thing You'll Ever Do

By Deirdre Dingman, MPH,
CHES, CTTS

After 30 years, Mary Thomson is no longer a smoker—she is a quitter, and Gulfcoast South AHEC's *QuitTeam* loves quitters. Mary is one of a growing number of ex-smokers who has graduated from the *Quit Smoking Now* program facilitated by GSAHEC staff members Deirdre Dingman and Jessica Balos. Mary attended the program led by Deirdre at the Sarasota County Health Department, North Port location, and she agreed to share her story.

Mary's motivation to quit was largely a result of her young daughter's concern. Mary's daughter learned about the effects of tobacco from a school prevention program and had been asking Mary to stop smoking. Having lost her own father to a smoking-related illness, she understood her daughter's fears. She decided she was willing to enter the *Quit Smoking Now* program offered by Gulfcoast South AHEC.

In the *Quit Smoking Now* program, the group learns about the diseases directly linked to tobacco use. Mary was most affected by the Tar Jar, her carbon monoxide reading, and the Ten Years Game. The Tar Jar is a visual example of the tar which coats a smoker's lungs. A breath carbon monoxide (CO) test shows how much carbon monoxide, a poisonous gas, is replacing the oxygen in a smoker's blood stream. The higher the CO reading, the harder one's heart has to work to carry oxygen to the cells in the rest of the body, which increases the risk of heart disease and heart attack. The Ten Years Game is a personal inventory of the past ten years—it gives smokers an idea of what ten years feels like in real terms. The life expectancy of an average smoker is reduced



by ten or more years. Mary has spent the last decade raising her daughter and grasps quite well what it would mean to have missed those years.

Mary quickly embraced the group's process. It is similar to a 12-step program—it works if the person “works” it. First, Mary and the members of the group quit smoking in their homes and cars. Next, they became aware of the actions or situations that triggered the urge to smoke and tried to challenge those reactions by not lighting up every time. Mary cut down to ten cigarettes a day, and on her *Quit Day* she began using a nicotine replacement product to help her remain tobacco free. The group received a *Quit Day* bag containing tools to help manage some of the two-minute tobacco cravings. Mary regarded this as a fun and useful part of the class. Quitting smoking significantly reduced Mary's CO level,

and she returned each week to offer help and seek support from her group. Mary felt that hearing real life examples from the facilitator increased the program's impact.

To remain a quitter, Mary needs to replace the effects of nicotine and smoking with gratification from nontoxic sources. Deep breathing, journaling, exercise, mindfulness, and healthy eating—all contribute to long-term smoking abstinence. Mary has made a commitment to routinely walk for exercise, eat well, and plan ahead for times when she might be tempted to smoke. Coping with stress is hard for everyone, but for Mary it will NOT include smoking—smoking is not an option for an ex-smoker. Mary is a caring person who brought warmth to the group, and she had a vested interest in each group member. We are very proud of having been a part of this positive change in Mary's life!

Meet Our Team: Gulfcoast South AHEC TCS

Deirdre Ann Dingman, MPH, CHES, CTTS Tobacco Cessation Specialist, GSAHEC

Deirdre is a former smoker who started her career as a social worker in rural North Carolina. During her tenure at Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center, the hospital went tobacco free; this event sparked her

interest in tobacco education.

Deirdre holds a BS in Social Work as well as a graduate degree in Public Health Education, both from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. In addition, she is a Certified Health Education Specialist as well as a Certified Tobacco Treatment Specialist. Her focus is on tobacco cessation, obesity prevention and the prevention of the chronic diseases to which they both contribute.

Currently a Tobacco Cessation Specialist at Gulfcoast South AHEC, Deirdre works to educate and support clients and providers in the medically underserved communities in Charlotte and Sarasota counties.



Meet Our Team: Gulfcoast North AHEC

Veronique Desautels, MBA, CHES

Veronique Desautels was trained as a Health Educator at the University of Florida and completed her Certification as a Health Education Specialist (CHES). In addition, she achieved a Masters Degree in Business Administration,

specializing in healthcare management. She is an ambassador for chronic disease prevention in underserved communities and has worked in the areas of risk factor awareness, weight management, and smoking for most of her career. Veronique is passionate about her work because she feels she connects well with people and loves to learn about different cultures and ethnicities. It would be a success for Veronique if all her patients were more aware of their habits, know the available resources, make a behavior modification, and quit smoking. She hopes the program will be adopted for a longer period in order to have a long-term effect on Florida's state of health.



A.T.T.A.C. AHEC Tobacco Training And Cessation

Jessica Allen Balos, MA, CTTS Tobacco Cessation Specialist, GSAHEC

Jessica has spent much of her 12-year career working for non-profit and state agencies to educate healthcare providers on public health issues.

support to smokers interested in quitting. An ex-smoker herself, Jessica understands the struggle smokers face when they decide to quit, and enjoys using her knowledge in helping the medically underserved in DeSoto and Manatee Counties.

She holds a BA in Psychology and Communications from Dominican University in River Forest, Illinois and a graduate degree in Psychology and Social Research from Concordia University, also in River Forest. Jessica is also a Certified Tobacco Treatment Specialist.

As a Tobacco Cessation Specialist with Gulfcoast South AHEC, Jessica trains healthcare providers on accepted smoking cessation treatment guidelines and provides



The QuitLine is a toll-free telephone-based tobacco use cessation service. Any person living in Florida who wants to try to quit smoking can use the QuitLine. The following services are available through the QuitLine:

- Counseling sessions
- Self help materials
- Counseling and materials in English and Spanish
- Translation service for other languages
- Pharmacotherapy assistance
- TDD service for hearing impaired

Local Tobacco Awareness Project Wins First Place at National Conference

By Joan Beatty-Lee
Recruitment & Youth Programs
Coordinator, GSAHEC

DeSoto High School students Jaleesa Knuckles, Crystal Mendez, and Rita Apac were awarded the first place for their Community Awareness project "Tobacco Awareness" at the Health Occupation Students of America (HOSA) National Leadership Conference which took place in June, 2008 in Dallas, Texas.

The triumphant trio from Arcadia, Florida chose the topic of Tobacco Awareness because it is a health issue of

national interest and local ramifications. These students have a vested interest in making their community aware of this particular health problem because the recent statistics for DeSoto County show that approximately 21.2 percent of adults are current smokers, topping the state average of 19.3 percent.

Jaleesa, Crystal, and Rita worked diligently under the tutelage of their HOSA Advisor, Marilyn Goodman, to plan and conduct activities that would promote awareness and inform their community about the dangers of tobacco. They set up their Tobacco Awareness booth at

three community health fairs and distributed educational brochures on second hand smoke, pregnancy smoking, age targeting by advertisers, and the chemicals found in cigarettes. The giveaways were a big hit, but the students remarked that the display of a set of healthy lungs next to a set of smoker's lungs had the biggest impact on the community. The lung display provided the viewers with a firsthand look at the effect that tobacco has on the lungs, and it was a harsh but effective learning experience for many of them. These three remarkable students also went to the Arcadia City Council to request a week set aside for the purpose of making the community aware of the facts and consequences of tobacco use. The request was granted, and the City Council proclaimed the dates from November 5 through 11 as "Tobacco Awareness Week". During this week, the students designed informative posters that were displayed in local businesses, created tray liners for local restaurants, and wrote articles for the local newspaper. A few of their other endeavors included showcasing their booth in the DeSoto County Christmas Parade and at the DeSoto County Fair, poster

contests for the middle schools, essay contests for the high school, and a display at DeSoto Memorial Hospital to support the hospital's mandate of a smoke free environment.

Their hard work and dedication to their project rightfully earned them the first place and they can rest assured that they accomplished their goal of raising community awareness about the dangers of tobacco. As one student affirmed, "We feel that we have involved all ages and ethnic groups in our community, covered a timely issue, and promoted goodwill and public relations for our HOSA chapter."

Jaleesa has since graduated from DeSoto High School, and Crystal and Rita are juniors. These outstanding young women plan to stay involved with HOSA and pursue their goal—a career in healthcare.

As an academic partner with the DeSoto High School HOSA chapter, Gulfcoast South AHEC is pleased to congratulate Jaleesa, Crystal, and Rita on their outstanding awards and looking forward to working with this HOSA chapter again during the 2008-2009 school year!



From left to right: Rita Apac, Jaleesa Knuckles, and Crystal Mendez

NEW!

Toll Free Florida AHEC Network

1-87-QUIT

AHEC Tobacco Training and Cessation Day of Service

By Vanessa Travieso

The USF Area Health Education Center is on the ATTAC again. On Monday, October 20, 2008, sixty five USF College of Nursing students visited Hillsborough county schools to empower and inform middle school students with knowledge about the dangers of tobacco.

The AHEC Tobacco Training and Cessation (ATTAC) program is currently on its second year in action since receiving funding from the

Masters Settlement Agreement. ATTAC was formerly known as Partners in Prevention of Substance Abuse (PIPSA). The program has successfully brought together many healthcare professional and middle school students for nine years.

Sixty five nursing students, on their Pediatric Clinical rotation, hesitantly switched hats to become teachers for one day. During that one day the nursing students visited fourteen classrooms in five schools and taught over 1,500 students. The lessons included



information on how smoking speeds aging, the dangers of second hand smoke, and spit tobacco. The nursing students had posters, bracelets, stickers, and other fun items in their student kits, but most importantly they had training and knowledge acquired during their rotation through the implementation of modules and lectures.

Once again AHEC has successfully brought healthcare and middle school students together in its continuous efforts to meet the AHEC mission to connect students to careers, professionals to communities and communities to better health.

ork Tobacco Cessation Services Number

T-NOW-6

or 1-877-848-6696

Breathe Easy Zones coming to Sarasota College Campuses

By Megan Jourdan, Tobacco Prevention Specialist at Sarasota County Health Department

Tobacco use in college age youth is on the rise. In 1991, only 23 percent of college students smoked, but today nearly 40 percent of students are smokers. To curb tobacco use and secondhand smoke exposure on college campuses, the Sarasota County Health Department (SCHD) is collaborating with Gulfcoast South Area Health Education Center (GSAHEC) to follow the lead of Florida State University and the University of Florida by creating *Breathe Easy Zones* on two of Sarasota's college campuses: University of South Florida's Sarasota Campus (USF:SAR) and New College of Florida (NCF).

A *Breathe Easy Zone* is an area from 20 to 50 feet around the

perimeter of a building where smoking is prohibited. The "Florida Clean Indoor Air Act" which prohibits smoking inside buildings was enforced in 1985. As a result, groups of smokers tend to congregate outside the entrance exposing people who enter or exit the building to a cloud of dangerous secondhand smoke, and adoption of *Breathe Easy Zones* will decrease this exposure. The creation and implementation of the *Breathe Easy Zone* policy provides a wonderful segue to free campus-wide cessation classes, which GSAHEC plans to make available on USF:SAR and NCF campuses for students, staff, and faculty.

According to Dr. Kevin Frentz at FSU, *Breathe Easy Zones* are best created by establishing a school-wide policy that allows staff and students to voluntarily create zones around their

buildings. Once the occupants of a building express interest, the school provides signs to indicate the boundaries of the *Breathe Easy Zone*. The enforcement of the *Breathe Easy Zone* is then the responsibility of the buildings' inhabitants. At FSU, instead of issuing smoking citations for individuals who smoke within the *Breathe Easy Zone*, a "soft enforcement" approach—simple explanation of the policy to smokers—has been effective. When educating the public about *Breathe Easy Zones*, Dr. Frentz shares that it is important to emphasize the policy as protecting the rights of non-smokers rather than infringing upon the rights of smokers.

The SCHD is currently working with NCF staff, faculty, and students to identify appropriate *Breathe Easy Zone* locations and to educate the student population on the policy. The SCHD is also collaborating with the Hillsborough County Health Department to create a *Breathe Easy Policy* at USF's main campus and hopes to expand *Breathe Easy Zones* to all USF and other local college campuses. *Breathe Easy Zones* can also be implemented in businesses interested in protecting health of their clients and staff. The SCHD has created educational toolkits on tobacco policies for businesses in Sarasota County.

For more information on *Breathe Easy Zones* in Sarasota County, please contact Megan Jourdan, Tobacco Prevention Specialist, at 941.861.2997.

<http://www.breatheeasy.fsu.edu/>

Stress and Continued Tobacco Use

By Megan Meister, MSW

With the economy in one of the worst recessions since the great depression, many people may question how it is possible that smokers are financially capable of supporting their habit given the cost of continued tobacco use. On average, a "pack-a-day" smoker spends \$1,400.00 per year to feed their nicotine addiction. While this is just the cost of the actual cigarettes, many consumers neglect to look at the total cost of smoking, which often includes the cost of repeated doctor visits or prescription medications used to treat ailments caused by or worsened due to tobacco use. These added considerations can oftentimes increase the cost of smoking two-fold.

In an economy where markets are crumbling, banks are failing, finances are tight and home foreclosures are at their

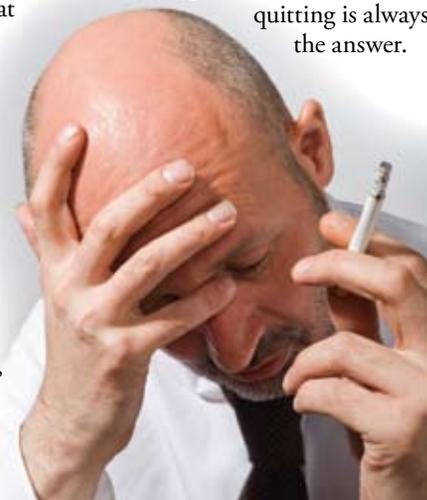
highest, many smokers will turn to their cigarettes for comfort during such stressful times. When asked, the average smoker will point to smoking as their primary method of stress relief. These smokers view their cigarettes as their "friend," the one constant thing in their life that they can turn to. With failing job markets, scarce credit, and rampant financial fears, many smokers feel that they need this "friend" now more than ever. This tendency in smokers appears to outweigh the significance of the total cost of their habit, even though many smokers are in such dire financial situations that the last thing they should be doing is throwing away thousands of dollars per year.

Retailers are aware of the potential drop in cigarette purchases due to financial strain in their communities. Out of apparent fear that their

average customers may not be able to afford their normal pack of cigarettes each day, service stations are now reportedly selling individual cigarettes for about twenty-five cents each. Smokers may indirectly see these societal factors as just another force facilitating their tobacco use.

Research shows that low Socio-Economic Status (SES) populations are especially at risk for continued tobacco use while experiencing stressful conditions. Current tobacco cessation efforts centered primarily around low SES populations are clearly hindered by the aforementioned factors. Cessation specialists are seeing higher percentages of cancelled appointments, and those who do attend their sessions are reporting that their lives are entirely too stressful

right now to even consider quitting. Specialists are seeing clear evidence that smokers are falling victim to the added stress and seeking the "safe haven" provided by their addiction. This makes the role of the specialist even more vital in this situation, as it becomes their responsibility to show the client that there are many other, healthier methods of dealing with stress, and quitting is always the answer.



Extra! Extra!: Free USF AHEC Tobacco Cessation Continuing Education for Healthcare Providers and Counselors

Modules Provide:

- Interactive, evidence-based courses on helping patients quit smoking and other tobacco use
- Reviewed by tobacco control experts and primary care physicians
- Resources include patient handouts on tobacco cessation, clinical forms, and helpful links
- CME/CEUs available for Florida healthcare providers: physicians, nurses, physician assistants, dentists, pharmacists, social workers and more!

The USF AHEC Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Program is pleased to provide **FREE OF CHARGE** online continuing education modules on tobacco.

Tobacco is the leading cause of morbidity and mortality in the United States. Clinicians familiar with basic behavioral tobacco interventions are better equipped to assist their tobacco using patients.

Module 1: Overview of Tobacco Cessation (1.25 cr)

Basic clinical behavioral interventions to help patients quit smoking.

Module 2: Motivational Interviewing for Primary Care (1.0 cr)

Techniques to motivate people with tobacco and other problems change behavior.

Module 3: Pharmacotherapy of Tobacco Cessation (1.0 cr)

Pharmacological interventions currently available to support tobacco cessation.

Module 4: Children and Tobacco: Three Cases (1.0 cr)

Prevention of tobacco use by children (ages 5-13) and exposure of children to environmental tobacco smoke.

Module 5: Pregnancy and Smoking (1.25 cr)

Negative health effects of smoking during pregnancy and intensive counseling intervention during pregnancy.

Module 6: Older Adults and Tobacco (1.0 cr)

Tobacco health effects and issues in primary healthcare of older tobacco users.

Module 7: Smokeless Tobacco (1.0 cr)

Various forms of smokeless tobacco, the extent of its use, its addictive nature, and the associated health effects.

Module 8: Basic Tobacco Cessation Interventions (1.5 cr)

Tobacco cessation using five patients in different stages of quitting.

Register today! Go to:
www.tobaccocme.com/ahec

Tobacco Companies Shift in Marketing

By Stacy Weiss

Since many places are going smoke free and not tobacco free, the tobacco companies are shifting their marketing strategies, promoting chew and dip in colorful containers and different flavors to entice and attract the younger generation and women.

Long gone are the days when “smoke free” and “tobacco free” were used simultaneously. With chewing tobacco rising in popularity among adolescents and the general public as a whole, we can now see the paradigm shift from using the phrase “smoke free” to “tobacco free”. The label of “tobacco free” would hinder people from using all tobacco related products, chewing tobacco included.

Like cigarettes, chewing tobacco comes in a variety of

flavors, flavors that appeal to adolescents and to few adults. It is no surprise that a smoker has become an outcast in many places—there are few places a smoker can go to and smoke. However, chewing tobacco and more recently SNUS can be used wherever or whenever a smoker gets the urge. SNUS is a tobacco product that comes in packets similar to miniature tea bags. SNUS users insert the bags under their upper lips where nicotine is absorbed.

It is not new news that tobacco companies go to great lengths to produce the best advertisements and marketing campaigns for their products. The tobacco companies are one of the few companies that need to be constantly looking for new customers, because their existing ones die or develop complications

due to the prolonged use of their product. Chewing tobacco is not excluded from this over the top marketing approach and has now been introduced to the public as an “easy to use” alternative to smoking.

The packaging for the SNUS and chewing tobacco has gone from tin cans, to brightly colored, easy to open tins. The colors and flavors do not discriminate and make it acceptable for a man or woman to use the product, regardless of the color of the tin or the flavor. It has been an uphill battle for those passionate about tobacco prevention and cessation to fight. The tobacco companies have been saying that SNUS and chewing tobacco are a great



alternative to smoking and are going to prove this by spending millions of dollars on marketing and promotional events, such as direct mail, print and Web advertising, and point-of-sale promotions.

The characteristics of the fight against the tobacco companies and their marketing and advertising tactics can be compared to the fight between David and Goliath. Although they may be stronger and have more financial resources, they don't have all the facts, and that is what we hope to deliver.

The University of South Florida Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Program inspires, trains, recruits, and retains a diverse and broad range of health professionals to practice in communities where the need is greatest. Your gift will assure improved access to healthcare for Florida's disenfranchised and medically needy populations.

To learn more about how you can become involved with AHEC, please call **Leila Martini at (813) 974-5013**.

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