

THE DAILY ARDMOREITE

It's Quittin' Time!

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By Steve Biehn, Staff Writer

Becca Brown started smoking at 15, along with many of her friends. Twenty years later, she wonders why she thought smoking was such a cool thing to do.

"I guess I was about midway through my 20s when I started figuring out that smoking cigarettes really is not all that attractive—they stink and, more importantly, I started learning how unhealthy cigarettes really are—something that no one really talked to me about when I started smoking," she said.

When she tried to quit, she realized stopping was much harder than she thought it would be.

"Every time I tried to stop, I found myself smoking even more," she said.

"This process rocked on for the next 15 years or so," she said. "Finally, in my mid-30s I knew somehow I had to stop if I wanted to be around to watch my son walk through the seasons of his life."

With the help of the prescription drug Chantix, Brown has finally become an ex-smoker.

Brown's story about going smoke-free is part of the Carter County Tobacco Use Prevention coalition's efforts to recognize Tobacco-Free Oklahoma Week and The Great American Smokeout.

Gov. Brad Henry proclaimed Nov. 14-21 as Tobacco-Free Oklahoma Week to promote tobacco-free property policies that protect Oklahoma workers and the public from secondhand smoke, model healthy behaviors for the state's youth and help support tobacco users who are trying to quit. Thursday's Great American Smokeout is an annual event created by the American Cancer Society to encourage smokers to stop.

In Oklahoma, tobacco is responsible for more than 6,000 deaths each year. An additional 120,000 Oklahomans suffer from cancer, heart disease and other chronic diseases caused by tobacco use or secondhand smoke. The majority of those in Oklahoma who use tobacco are trying to stop smoking. Carter County Tobacco Use Prevention will focus on supporting Oklahoma smokers who want to quit at part of The Great American Smokeout.

"Tobacco use causes so many health problems, from heart disease and cancer to emphysema and other respiratory issues," said Dana Dorsey-Turner, chairman of Carter County Tobacco Use Prevention coalition. "We have vigorously support—and will continue to support—local initiatives in Carter County that will protect the public and our children and help those who want to quit using tobacco products."

Tobacco's toll on Oklahoma's youth is staggering. Each year, 4,700 Oklahoman youngsters become new daily smokers, and 216,000 of them are exposed to secondhand smoke at home. An estimated 87,000 Oklahomans who are now younger than 18 will ultimately die prematurely from smoking.

"Tobacco-Free Oklahoma Week is a great way to raise awareness about tobacco issues and celebrate those who have taken action to reduce the toll of tobacco," Turning Point chairman Sister Carolyn Stoutz said. "As a member of the health care profession, I see daily the effects of tobacco on one's body, and it saddens and scares me. My hope resides in the fact that many of our mayors, city councils, business and civic leaders have been working in partnership with



The American Cancer Society created The Great American Smokeout as a day to encourage smokers to quit.

Turning Point and Carter County Tobacco Use Prevention on this important issue. We are excited to celebrate the success those partnerships have fostered and look forward to a tobacco-free future.”

Those who use tobacco and are trying to quit may contact the toll-free Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline at (800) QUIT-NOW where Oklahoma residents can receive free quit coaching and free patches or gum.