

## **Kick The Habit: Help available for those striving to quit tobacco**

The new year is a time when many look forward to making positive changes and Janie Horton, Carter County Turning Point Tobacco Coalition, said thousands of Oklahomans plan to do so by quitting tobacco.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, tobacco and secondhand smoke contain hundreds of toxic chemicals such as cyanide, arsenic, strychnine and other deadly poisons. As a result, far too many suffer from cancer and heart disease.

While giving up cigarettes or smokeless tobacco can be tough, people who make that choice for themselves or their loved ones can find a variety of sources and types of support.

“There’s never been a better time to quit, with so many options for state-of-the-art treatment and support available,” said Tracey Strader, executive director of the Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust. Those wishing to quit can turn to the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline, either by calling (800) QUIT NOW (800-784-8669) or visiting [www.OKhelpline.com](http://www.OKhelpline.com), to receive free coaching over the phone or through the web. Helpline participants also receive materials to help them quit and are eligible for nicotine patches, gum or lozenges.

Since 2003, more than 250,000 people have contacted the Helpline. Horton said many of those helped called or logged on from Carter County.

“About 70 people from Carter County registered to receive services from the Helpline in October and November. We anticipate that number will jump with New year’s resolutions. It’s a great time to break away from the pack,” she said.

Another new quit smoking tool is Smokefree TXT, a text messaging program available from [www.smokefree.gov](http://www.smokefree.gov). Participants can sign up by texting QUIT or IQUIT to the number 47848.

Horton said the main [smokefree.gov](http://www.smokefree.gov) site has specialized links dedicated to women and teens, along with a Spanish site at <http://espanol.smokefree.gov>.

“Close-to-home support from spouses, relatives, friends and local health care professionals also can prove invaluable,” Horton said.

No matter how a person chooses to quit, the health benefits start almost immediately. The American Cancer Society says an ex-smoker can experience upon quitting:

- Decreased blood pressure with 20 minutes.
- Oxygen level in blood returning to normal within eight hours.
- Decreased chance of heart attack beginning with 24 hours.
- Improved ability to smell and taste within 48 hours.
- Improved circulation and lung function within three months.
- The risk of coronary heart disease cut to half of a smoker’s chances within one year.

“Since smoking affects nearly every system in the body, quitting is the single most important step a smoker can take to live a longer, healthier life,” said Strader.

Area residents can contact Horton by calling (580) 226-1838 or emailing her at [janiehorton@hotmail.com](mailto:janiehorton@hotmail.com) to learn more about tobacco control activities.