



A FIRST BREATH SUCCESS STORY

By Stan Milam



BELOIT - Sebastian is a healthy three-month-old infant who may owe his health to his mom, Amber who decided to quit smoking.

"I started smoking when I was 13," Amber said. "A worked up to a pack a day, which is where I stayed until I decided to quit."

Amber decided to quit smoking when she was subjected to facts about the dangers of smoking. She became aware of those facts through the *First Breath* program administered at the Beloit Area Community Health Center by Beloit Health Department nurses Jeanne Cole and Olga Myers.

"I learned that my smoking was not good for the baby," Amber said. "When I learned that smoking was not good for his health, I knew I had to quit."

Amber, a client in the WIC program, made the decision to quit when she started seeing Cole and Myers as part of the WIC program.

"I first cut back to a half pack a day," she said. "I quit entirely in January when I was six months pregnant."

Quitting is one thing, but staying smoke free is another, Amber said.

"I had to find other things to do when I craved a cigarette," she said. "I started chewing gum during times when I would normally have a cigarette like after meals."

Amber admits that she didn't think much about how smoking affected her own health, but became very concerned when she learned about the effects on her baby.

"I quit for Sebastian, but I now see how it has affected me," Amber said. "I feel a lot better, I can breath a lot easier and I can tell a difference in things like how my food tastes."

Amber said she's grateful for the support she has received from her family.

"I live with my sister-in-law, and she smokes," Amber said. "But, she respects my decision to not smoke and she doesn't smoke around Sebastian. It's her apartment, but she goes outside when she wants to smoke."

Amber said she has no plans to resume smoking.

"Like I said, I stopped because of the baby, but I now see what an effect smoking had on me," she said. "Now I have two reasons to stop smoking and not start again ... Sebastian's health and mine."