



FIRST BREATH  
WISCONSIN WOMEN'S  
HEALTH FOUNDATION

## A FIRST BREATH SUCCESS STORY



By Beth Turner

**GRANT COUNTY** - Charity and Earl Rockwell. The names could conjure up images of an older, established maybe even wealthy couple. The reality is, this husband and wife team is young...21 and 22 with three young children living in rural Wisconsin and dealing very much with the joys and struggles of everyday life.

"I never thought I'd smoke again," Charity says while trying to feed, quiet and control her three little girls ages three, two and nine months. Charity and her husband Earl both quit smoking before the birth of their youngest daughter, Emily. While pregnant with Emily,



From left to right: Earl, Emily, Robyn, Gracie, Charity, and Kathy Marty

Charity had filled out some paper work at a Grant County WIC clinic indicating her desire to quit smoking. She was not enrolled in any prenatal care programs. Charity could have gotten lost in the system if it weren't for a First Breath referral form at that WIC clinic. Kathy Marty, Grant County's First Breath Coordinator, received Charity's paperwork and a year long relationship began.

"September of last year was our initial contact. By February, she (Charity) and her husband had quit smoking and she had delivered the baby," Marty says. But then life got in the way.

"I didn't expect the urges to come back so strong after the baby was born," Charity says. She and Earl recall a family visit. They went to visit Charity's dad. He smokes. During the visit both Charity and Earl smoked for the first time since Emily was born. Soon after that Charity asked Earl to buy "just one pack"...and they were both lighting up again. "Don't think just a drag or two won't suck you back in," they say.

When Kathy speaks with the Rockwell's on this gray, drizzly fall day, Charity says she wants the First Breath materials again; the candy, the water bottle, the pen to write out feelings and frustrations, but most of all the encouraging words and phone calls.

At the height of this most recent smoking set back, Charity was reaching for a cigarette about 12 times a day. She's down to smoking just three or four.

"I try to have the first one after noon then try and start later and later in the day and then only smoke half of one (cigarette)," Charity says.

"The hardest is one. Giving up that one," she adds. Knowing what the triggers are and setting a quit date (Thanksgiving Day) are helping Charity this time around.

She realizes that smoking was and still is a way to bond with her dad. While she goes through the quitting process, Charity says she'll have to limit the visits with her dad. Also knowing that "just one" cigarette is a stress reliever for her, Charity is relying on another outlet- prayer.

"The biggest thing is praying," she says. Charity recalls what happened one night after dealing with an extremely stressful day and smoking about a dozen cigarettes. "I prayed that night and the next morning I didn't have the urges. I didn't smoke until noon." And that started the stopping process for her.

While Earl bounces the baby on his knees and Charity tries to dress the two year old she warns other moms.... "be prepared after the baby." Kathy confirms the fact that postpartum smoking urges can be intense, so have a plan in place and First Breath materials on hand.

While Charity turns to prayer for help in dealing with the cravings, others might rely on being active, talking with a friend, reading a book, or even writing down their thoughts and goals for themselves and their baby.

Earl says he supports Charity and will hide cigarettes from her. As for his own efforts, he says he's waiting for Charity to take the lead and quit.

"It's so easy to start up again. Everyone smokes or chews there," Earl says about his job place.

As for home life, the Rockwell's don't want their little girls to think it's OK to smoke, and they do not want to send mixed messages to them.

"Smoking's not a sin and you won't go to hell for it," Earl says. But Charity adds, "it can destroy your witness and cause others to stumble."

As Kathy prepares to leave Earl Rockwell says, "I'm going to try and quit too."