



A FIRST BREATH SUCCESS STORY



By Michelle Baier



Heidi, Jeff and Zander, speaking to First Breath providers about their experience

MADISON - Heidi Riechers had been smoking a half a pack a day since she was 18 years old. She had attempted to quit six times (in a 10 year time span) prior to receiving support from her *First Breath* counselor, Ann Dodge, RN, BSN of UW Health Clinic 2 months into her pregnancy.

Heidi said she realized how important it was for her to quit and how much she wanted to succeed the first time she felt her baby, Zander, kick.

What also worked for Heidi to help her quit was information. She knew she had to break her habit when she saw a video at the clinic of a woman having an ultrasound as she smoked a cigarette, and she could see the baby's lungs struggle to collect oxygen.

It took Heidi 3 months to quit and she has been smoke free for 9 months now.

The reach of the *First Breath* program extended to her husband, Jeff Riechers. Jeff had smoked since he was 12 years old and smoked throughout Heidi's pregnancy. This was an obstacle to quitting for Heidi. Heidi found herself nagging him to quit, but it didn't help. Heidi and Ann talked about the best way to approach it and decided that offering a lot of praise and encouragement was a better way.

After realizing how his continued smoking was affecting Heidi he decided to quit too. "I didn't smoke around her or at home, so I figured it wouldn't bother her," said Jeff. He didn't know that he smelled of cigarettes and that his smoking made it harder for her to quit. "I was motivated to fully quit when I got to feel Zander kick," says Jeff.

Jeff has been smoke free now for 6 months. Jeff says that when he feels any type of craving to smoke, he just picks up Zander and holds him. "I don't want him to smell smoke on me or get sick."

Heidi confirms, "The *First Breath* program is wonderful. I could not have quit without it." Both Heidi and Jeff agree, "Anyone can quit, but they really have to want to."