



**Three Good Reasons to Quit:
Lifetime Smoker Finally Gives up the Habit for her Three Kids
BY TARA MARSHALL, THE CHIPPEWA HERALD**

CHIPPEWA FALLS - Tonya Davidson, 23, has been a smoker from the age of 12. She quit twice because of pregnancy, but started up after having each of her two children.



In preparation for her third child, she's given up smoking again. This time, she hopes it's permanent.

Davidson is one of the many women taking advantage of the Chippewa County Department of Public Health's *First Breath* program.

Davidson was always aware of the health risks involved with smoking during pregnancy and wasn't about to bring an unhealthy baby into the world, she said.

"It was somebody else's life," she said. "I didn't want to be someone to look back and go, 'Why didn't I do this?' or 'Why did I do that?'"

Davidson was worried about the effects smoking has on a fetus. Side effects include premature birth, low birth weight and asthma. "If you read the side of the cigarette pack it lists some of the problems," she said.

But there were other things that Davidson didn't know that she learned through the *First Breath* program and her PHN, Carol Lendle. Although Davidson knew what could happen to mom and baby, she learned exactly why those things might happen.

"I knew it affected the baby, but they explained it differently," she said. "It squeezes the umbilical cord and takes air from the baby."

Another tip Davidson learned is that even though she never smoked around her children, they could still be affected by nicotine on her clothes. "I thought we were playing it safe," she said. But after reading the information brochures, she realized there was more than meets the eye. "You sit there and go 'wow,'" she said.

"We give them support and let them know that it really is hard to quit smoking," Lendle said. "Having a support person to quit with you helps, too."

Davidson's fiancé was able to lend additional support by quitting with her. "I was the smoker," she said. "He was the occasional smoker."

Taking one step at a time

Although apprehensive at first, after reading and talking about the program with Carol, she became more interested. "At first I thought it was going to be a whole bunch of people in a group sitting around talking about quitting," she said. "I didn't want someone breathing down my neck either." She saw a bulletin posted in Wal-Mart, read a few pamphlets and then realized it would be more individualized.

Each nurse and dietitian on staff at the Public Health Department is trained in the *First Breath* program, which is funded through the Wisconsin Women's Health Foundation. If one of their patients is pregnant and a smoker, they talk to her about the program in hopes she will join.

"They recommend the program," Lendle said. "In turn (for joining) the women get gifts. They are like little incentive gifts."

She enrolled in the program Sept. 5. After her quit date, Sept. 7, she hasn't had a single cigarette.

For her, "cold turkey" was the way to go.

After the first month, she said the cravings subsided as well - except during extremely stressful times. "It was a challenge," she said. "Last week the van broke down and we had to borrow someone else's, which was a gas guzzler."

When faced with the extra stress, instead of going back to old habits she occupied herself with other things. "I played with the kids, cleaned the yard and decorated the baby's room," she said.

Davidson is due to give birth to her third child on May 9, and says she really wants to stay off cigarettes for good. After all, she wants to be there for her children and her grandchildren.

"The first month may be hard, but it's worth it," she said.

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