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- *Karen F. quit smoking in August with support from the New York State Smokers' Quitline*
- *Timely radio spot and call, plus coaching and medication, helped Karen F. finally quit for good*
- *After four months of being smoke-free, the benefits are dramatic and palpable*

'DIVINE INTERVENTION' AND QUITLINE HELP LONG ISLAND WOMAN BECOME SMOKE-FREE

Riverhead resident Karen F. wants to be an inspiration to those looking to quit smoking for the New Year

BUFFALO, N.Y. – Dec. 21, 2018 – As the New Year approaches, a common resolution tops many tobacco-users' to-do lists: making 2019 the year they finally quit for good. Smoking is an addiction and difficult to overcome, but thousands achieve a smoke-free life each year with support and medication from their healthcare providers and the New York State Smokers' Quitline. One Long Island resident knows this very well, as Karen F. of Riverhead gained freedom from nicotine back in August.



Karen (*pictured with her father*), now 53, said she began smoking more than 35 years ago in high school due to peer pressure. She had quit on occasion over the years – especially during two pregnancies – but the habit always returned. Then one day this past summer, while sitting in the car, a voice on the radio spoke about angels manifesting through friends or random phone calls. At that moment, Karen received a follow-up call from a Quit Coach with the New York State Smokers' Quitline.

"I used to find every excuse possible *not* to quit," Karen said. "When I got that follow-up call just as the radio voice said 'you'll know when you're being spoken to by an angel,' I knew it was a sign and I really didn't want to disappoint the Quitline. I smoked for so long that I felt like I had lost a friend during those first few weeks of quitting. Now I realize there's not one positive thing about cigarettes. They cost money, they smell horrific, and they're designed to kill."

Karen said although the first month of quitting smoking was difficult, she felt empowered when she refused cigarettes from an acquaintance while vacationing in New Orleans. Not only did free nicotine patches from the New York State Smokers' Quitline greatly help Karen, but also her phone conversations with Quit Coaches played a major part for quit-success.

"The Quit Coaches reassured me it would take a little time for my body to get rid of all the junk in my system, but that I'd start to notice the benefits more and more," Karen said. "Without a support system or anyone to talk to, it could be easy to convince myself to buy just one more pack. The Quit Coaches care and are there for me. They remind me not to turn back to the habit and ask, 'Why put yourself through that stress and anxiety again?'"

Now that she lives a smoke-free life, Karen no longer suffers from a chronic morning cough and is managing her diabetic condition much better. She exercises more, can walk faster and climbs stairs without gasping for air after a flight or two. Karen cooks, crochets and finds other activities to keep her busy whenever cigarette urges return. Finally, Karen also periodically searches online to learn about the added health benefits with each passing month of being smoke-free.

The New York State Smokers' Quitline is available as a free resource for all New Yorkers seeking help to quit smoking. Quit Coaches can provide personalized coaching support and check eligibility for a starter kit of nicotine replacement therapy. In addition, the New York State Smokers' Quitline recommends smokers talk to their healthcare providers about quitting and ask for a prescription for stop-smoking medications – most of which are covered by health insurance plans.

"Smoking continues to be the leading cause of preventable death in the world, but many free resources are available in New York State to help smokers quit," said Pat Folan, director for Northwell Health Center for Tobacco Control, based in Great Neck, N.Y. "By combining coaching and medication, the odds for quitting successfully increase threefold. Healthcare

providers play a major role in getting the process started, between prescribing the right medications and making referrals to the New York State Smokers' Quitline for extra support. Health plans, especially Medicaid, often cover extra nicotine replacement therapy and local cessation classes. Quitting smoking is the best thing you can do for your health, so use all the benefits available to make it happen."

This New Year and any year, smokers should call the New York State Smokers' Quitline at **1-866-NY-QUITS** (1-866-697-8487) anytime the journey gets tough for achieving or maintaining a smoke-free life. Quit Coaches are available seven days a week beginning at 9 a.m., and additional resources are available online at www.nysmokefree.com.

About the New York State Smokers' Quitline

The New York State Smokers' Quitline is a service of the New York State Department of Health and based at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center. It is one of the first and busiest state quitlines in the nation, and has responded to more than 2.5 million calls since its inception in 1999. The Quitline encourages tobacco users to talk with their healthcare providers and access available Medicaid or health insurance benefits for stop-smoking medications. All New York State residents can call **1-866-NY-QUITS** (1-866-697-8487) for coaching and resources, free of charge, seven days a week beginning at 9 a.m. Visit www.nysmokefree.com for more information.

About Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center

Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center is a community united by the drive to eliminate cancer's grip on humanity by unlocking its secrets through personalized approaches and unleashing the healing power of hope. Founded by Dr. Roswell Park in 1898, it is the only National Cancer Institute-designated comprehensive cancer center in Upstate New York. Learn more at www.roswellpark.org, or contact us at 1-800-ROSWELL (1-800-767-9355) or ASKRoswell@roswellpark.org.

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