

Howell learns “You don’t have to give in to the temptation” of cigarettes

Tori Howell never thought she could quit smoking. The 50-year-old Fairhope resident had stopped smoking several times, but always started back. But on January 3, 2011, she resolved to quit for a different reason: herself.

“I had quit smoking for every reason but the right one,” she said. She finally quit for herself, because “I didn’t want any more stress in my life,” she said. “It’s the best thing I’ve done.”

Howell said her more than a pack-a-day addiction was taking its toll on her budget. When she heard an ad about a free service from the Alabama Department of Public Health offering counseling and medication to help her quit, she was ready to try again.

Howell is grateful for the help she received from www.alabamaitnow.com, Alabama’s online site to help those who want to quit tobacco use. “I tell everyone about it,” she said. “Knowing that someone was checking on me helped,” she said. “This was someone who didn’t know me, but felt the need to know how I was doing.”

Since the site opened one year ago, more than 1,500 Alabamians have registered for its free services, including master’s level counselors, a personalized quit plan and four weeks of free nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) patches for those who are enrolled in the program and are medically eligible.

Howell said she had looked at the [www.alabamaitnow](http://www.alabamaitnow.com) site before she signed up for the program. Being able to use the online service late at night made her quit attempt easier, she said. “If you’re stressed out and can’t sleep, you can

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use it up in the wee hours,” she said. “It was at my convenience. You didn’t have to talk to anyone.”

Howell tried her first cigarette before she was 10 years old. She became a regular smoker at 18. During the next 32 years, she quit a few times but always started back. But while online with her counselor, something stuck with her. Howell said her counselor told her she “didn’t have to give in to the temptation” of cigarettes. “Well, I got a major attitude about that,” Howell said. “Then I thought, we are in control of our own life. And saying that has made my quit easier.”

The best part of being a nonsmoker is “not having the hassle,” she said. Howell said she no longer has to worry if she has cigarettes, a lighter or matches, not being able to smoke somewhere, emptying ashtrays, etc. Her clothing doesn’t smell like smoke. “It’s very liberating,” she said.

While the web site offers four weeks of free NRT to those enrolled in counseling and medically eligible, Howell ended up quitting tobacco without using the patches. By the time her doctor had approved their use, Howell’s quit date had already come. So she quit without any medications. She was determined not to let anything stop her. “I feel differently about things this time,” she said. “Every day gets better.”



Tori Howell

Alabamaitnow.com is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Users can log in and begin the counseling process. Anyone can visit the site for information or register to become a member. Members can chat with other users who are quitting at the same time.

The free online service is offered in addition to the Alabama Tobacco Quitline, a phone-based service that provides the same free programs to users who want to call a counselor to make a quit plan. Callers may dial 1-800-QuitNow (1-800-784-8669) and sign up for services. Alabama’s Quitline has been in operation since 2005 and is funded by ADPH and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

For additional information, visit the Web site at www.adph.org/tobacco, or call Kenya Dillard at (334) 206-3001.