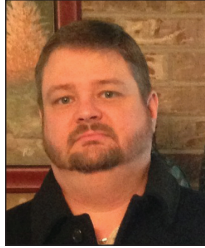


# Success!

## Clearing the Air: Community Success Stories

1.16.13

Steven Melton knows about peer pressure.



At age 15, he began smoking because his friends did. "We'd ride our bikes to the dime store, buy candy and a drink, and a guy would sell us cigarettes," he said. At 17, he hid his tobacco addiction from his mom who thought he was drinking alcohol because he would eat a peppermint on his way home from his job bagging groceries. His mother was unhappy with Melton's decision to use tobacco and bought him an entire carton and insisted he smoke it in front of her. The tactic didn't work and Melton began dipping at age 18. "I didn't like chewing tobacco," he said. "So when I couldn't smoke, I was dipping."

Melton is the information technology manager for Russell Corporation's Distribution Center in Montgomery. A Phenix City native, he lives in Prattville. He and his wife are the parents of a 13-year-old daughter and a 10-year-old son.

"I never smoked around the kids and not in the house," he said. "But you could smell it in my truck. And it's still hurting your kids."

Melton said his son was born two months premature. His son has seasonal asthma which is aggravated by secondhand smoke. "My son always asked me to quit smoking," he said. "I felt guilty when he had asthma." He said he wanted to see his kids grow up but he wasn't able to kick the habit.

Melton quit once more than five years ago. "I made it about a month and a half," he said. "I was always on edge and irritable." Later, he tried e-cigarettes to help him quit but that didn't work.

Melton was a pack-a-day smoker, and used three to four pouches of dip every day. There were times when he had the pouch in his mouth and a cigarette too.

It was when his doctor told the 36-year-old that his lungs showed early signs of smoker's lungs that Melton decided it was time to quit for good. His mother had given him a pamphlet about the Alabama Tobacco Quitline and urged him to call the service. Melton was home sick with bronchitis and had begun the online counseling. As he was on the couch, the doorbell rang and it was the two weeks of nicotine replacement therapy patches from the Quitline. "I started that day," he said. "I threw away the last two cigarettes in the pack. And I haven't turned back." His quit date was October 25, 2011, several days earlier than he had originally planned.

Melton was drawn to the Quitline's online service, [alabamquitnow.com](http://alabamquitnow.com). "I'm a computer person," he said. "It was easier for me to do it that way. I can do it at my own time, and read it while I am sitting on the couch."

Melton has already recommended the service to others at work. He has shown co-workers how to sign up and begin the quit process with the free service. "I love not having to worry about certain things," he said. "I don't have to think and plan and go smoke outside when it's cold or raining." Melton said he enjoys staying with his friends and family when he is eating out instead of rushing outside to smoke a cigarette before everyone gets in the car to ride home. "The hassle" of smoking is not anything Melton misses, he said.

Ninety-nine percent of the time, Melton said, "cigarettes stink now. Then, once in a while, it smells like a steak. But within two to three minutes, the craving goes away," he said.

The counselor on the quitnow web site was able to offer suggestions to Melton such as changing his routine to help break the smoking addiction. "You finally make up your mind," he said. "But the patches still allowed me to get that nicotine while I was getting my head straight."

Melton said he feels healthier now that he is tobacco-free. "I can taste food and smell it being cooked," he said. He has had fewer sinus problems and feels better in general. His family is happy that he is tobacco-free. He is proof to others that quitting tobacco can be done.

"More and more people are coming to me and saying they want to quit," he said. "You have to want to quit. You can't just do it because everyone tells you to."

"It's nice to be done with it," Melton said. "I tell the others that I've done it. You can do it too."

Alabamaquitnow.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](http://www.adph.org/tobacco), or call Julie Hare at (334) 206-3830.