

MSU Smoking Cessation Pilot Program Yields Great Early Results

After smoking for more than 30 years, Alicia Bailey knew giving up her two-pack-per-day smoking habit wouldn't be easy.

In fact, she'd tried to quit smoking on her own enough times over the years to know exactly how tough it would be. But when she quit again on February 27, 2008 she was determined that this time she would quit for good.

Bailey, a human resource analyst at MSU Human Resources, has now been smoke-free for more than six months. She credits a unique MSU smoking cessation pilot program with helping her succeed.

The pilot program was the result of a partnership between Human Resources, Olin Health Center and the Office of the University Physician-Health4U Program.

The program combines the relatively new smoking cessation drug CHANTIX™ with medical evaluation, monitoring, education and behavioral support.

Bailey believes the program's reliance on a combination of approaches helped her succeed.

"The medication really helped a lot but if it had just been the CHANTIX™ without the other support, I wouldn't have made it," Bailey said. "The support group meetings and getting to know others who were going through it all at the same time was a huge help. If you smoked, you knew you would disappoint the group."

Though Bailey has completed the pilot program, she still attends periodic relapse prevention group meetings and finds the ongoing support of others to be very helpful.

"I still run into people all over

campus from my support group," Bailey said.

"Whether we're still not smoking is always the first question we ask each other."

Bailey readily admits quitting was, and still is, one of the hardest things she's ever done.

"The cravings were very intense and constant at first," Bailey said. "But the program taught me how to accept and deal with cravings and now I'll go days at a time without having a single craving or thinking much about it."

But even if the occasional cravings last forever, Bailey says the rewards of quitting smoking have been well worth the hard work.

Always a fan of exercise, Bailey began exercising more seriously after quitting and now bikes up to ten miles per day and enjoys running when she can too.

"The best feeling I ever had in my life was the first time I went for a long run on a beach awhile after quitting," Bailey said. "I was running faster and faster and for the first time my lungs weren't burning and I didn't feel like I was dying two minutes into it."

Bailey also is enjoying the financial benefits of not smoking.

So far she's used the money she no longer spends on cigarettes to take trips and even buy a great little used sports car she's always wanted.

"You save a lot of money when you stop buying cigarettes all the time," Bailey said. "It's so nice



Alicia Bailey with the car bought with cigarette savings.

not to always be wondering if you have enough cigarettes to make it through the night or if there are enough stores between you and where you are going to get more cigarettes if you need them."

But Bailey's absolute favorite reward came in a small package.

"My 7-year-old son came up to me one day and said 'Mom, I am so proud of you for not smoking anymore,'" Bailey recalls. "It's hard to beat something like that."

While university officials are still collecting data on participants who went through the later sessions of the pilot program, early results from the program track that Bailey participated in are impressive.

An amazing 81 percent of participants in the first pilot track tested nicotine-free three months after their quit date. And most of them, like Bailey, are still going strong. The final track of the pilot program began in early September and is expected to finish by the end of the year. The early success of the pilot program has already sparked discussions among program sponsors to find a way to continue offering the same or a similar program to the MSU community on an ongoing basis. 