



***NOTE TO MEDIA:** Nearly a dozen "Success Stories" and downloadable photos for different regions of New York State are available at the Quitline's Online News Room: <https://nysmokefree.com/newsroom>. Inspirational New Yorkers became nicotine-free in 2020 for a variety of reasons: COVID-19 concerns, the birth of a child, improved health, battling cancer and much more. Please reach out to the Quitline any time, any day, for supplemental interviews to enhance your coverage of New Year's resolutions and stories of hope heading into 2021.*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TWO YOUNG CATSKILL REGION WOMEN PROVIDE INSPIRATION TO BECOME NICOTINE-FREE IN 2021

Despite the challenges of 2020, Kendra H. and Desire R. overcame addictions to smoking and vaping with support from the New York State Smokers' Quitline

CATSKILL REGION, N.Y. – Dec. 31, 2020 – Kendra H. of Hamden, N.Y. and Desire R. of Grahamsville, N.Y. are shining examples of young adults who became nicotine-free in 2020 despite the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. Both overcome challenges and took steps to improve their health with support from the New York State Smokers' Quitline (Quitline).



Kendra (*pictured at left*), 22, smoked cigarettes casually since age 13, but fell on hard times this past spring. The stress of her mother's death, going back to college, relationship troubles and isolation due to COVID-19 lead to heavier daily smoking. As the pandemic prolonged, Kendra contemplated her possible susceptibility to the coronavirus as well as her family's history of cancer. She decided to take control of her health and called the Quitline.

"I couldn't go on like this – I wanted to handle stress in a healthier way," Kendra said. "Besides the free nicotine patches and nicotine gum I received from the Quitline, their Quit Coaches were especially helpful in terms of how to navigate cravings and handling the initial detox of quitting. Having a support system like this is so important. It's empowering to have someone to acknowledge what you're doing and to support your physical and mental health."

Desire (*pictured at right*), 32, first tried a cigarette 20 years ago and became both a smoker and vape-product user. She developed asthma and also recently endured health issues due to a car accident. Desire reached a breaking point and contacted the Quitline in June for support.



"The patches and gum got me started, and I eventually switched to ordinary chewing gum once I weaned off nicotine," Desire said. "Today, food tastes different, I can smell better, and my breathing is easier."

Kendra likewise feels rejuvenated due to becoming nicotine-free this past October. "I feel a sense of freedom and am managing my time better," she said. "I'm less congested and can exercise more but I'm not as winded. With the Quitline's help, I learned to tune out cravings and retrain my brain. I may be only 22, but I can immediately tell that being nicotine-free will add years to my life."

Desire, meanwhile, has a background in mental health counseling and hopes to return to work soon as a therapist. In fact, she recently earned a CASAC license and may leverage her knowledge to focus on helping others become nicotine-free.

"Everyone quits differently," Desire said. "Someone else's quit-plan may not work for you. The important thing is to be ready to quit – be able to look in the mirror and say you no longer want to have the urge to smoke. Then talk to someone. Surround yourself with people who will give you positive support."

The Quitline encourages all tobacco and vape-product users to make 2021 their best year ever by becoming nicotine-free, especially in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. According to the CDC, those who smoke [suffer more severe effects](#) if infected with the coronavirus.

The Quitline recommends tobacco and vape-product users consult a healthcare professional as part of a nicotine-free journey. Healthcare professionals can provide referrals to the Quitline for free quit-coaching and free NRT such as nicotine patches and nicotine gum or lozenges – and nearly all participants are eligible. The Quitline’s Quit Coaches are available seven days a week beginning at 9 a.m. by calling 1-866-NY-QUITS (1-866-697-8487) beginning at 9 a.m. or by visiting www.nysmokefree.com and requesting a call.

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 in Buffalo, N.Y. It is one of the first and busiest state quitlines in the nation and has responded to nearly 3 million calls since it began operating in 2000. The Quitline encourages nicotine users to talk with their healthcare professionals 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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