



***NOTE TO MEDIA:** Our press releases are available in downloadable PDF format at our Online News Room: <https://nysmokefree.com/newsroom>. The webpage also includes an Experts Database with healthcare professionals and researchers from every region of New York State. Please contact us anytime to arrange an interview with any of our experts and/or Success Story participants.*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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- *Kevin Z., age 30, believes overcoming cigarette addiction is much harder compared to drugs*
- *Resources from the NY Quitline and a mental health facility helped Kevin become tobacco-free*
- *Those in New York State can contact the NY Quitline seven days a week for free support*

LONG ISLAND RESIDENT OFFERS INSPIRATION FOR THOSE LOOKING TO BECOME TOBACCO-FREE IN 2025

New York State Quitline provided free support to Kevin Z. of Shirley, NY



Jan. 2, 2025 – *"Of all the drugs I once used, nothing compares to the challenge of overcoming an addiction to cigarettes. I'm living my best life now that I'm tobacco-free."*

These are words of wisdom from 30-year-old Kevin Z. (*pictured*) from the hamlet of Shirley on Long Island, who is again living tobacco*-free with free assistance from the [New York State Quitline](#) (NY Quitline). Kevin hopes his story will inspire others to pursue a tobacco-free lifestyle for 2025 and beyond.

Kevin endured a tough childhood and, at age 18, entered Brunswick Hospital Center in Amityville to treat depression, anxiety and addiction to a variety of drugs. Two years later while becoming sober, Kevin began using cigarettes during outdoor breaks with peers. He soon discovered he unfortunately replaced his addictions with another one.

“Smoking became the worst addiction yet,” Kevin recalled. “I stole money to buy cigarettes, stole packs from friends, and would even grab lit cigarette butts off the ground. Life felt like it was once again spiraling out of control until I joined the [Association for Mental Health and Wellness](#) a few years ago. That was the start of my tobacco-free journey.”

Through group cessation classes as well as an introduction to free services from the NY Quitline, Kevin learned how to stay quit – or so he thought. After two years of being tobacco-free, Kevin had a slip-up in November 2024. Unlike past experiences, however, Kevin immediately resumed the desire to remain tobacco-free.

“I remembered how helpful the (NY) Quitline’s specialists were, and gave them a call,” he said. “This time around, I received free nicotine patches in the mail. The specialists reminded me to take things day-to-day and to practice the ‘[five D’s](#)’ – especially delaying use of cigarettes. I quickly became tobacco-free again and intend to stay that way.”

Kevin hopes his tale can inspire others to keep persevering with their quit-journey, even if they have a slip-up or relapse. Today, he serves as a smoking cessation group class leader at the Association for Mental Health and Wellness’s Recovery Center. Outside of work, he currently is also assisting his older brother to become tobacco-free.

“What matters is the work you put in,” Kevin advises. “It’s tough, but you’ve got to avoid the people, places and situations that can lure you to want to smoke again. Remind yourself that you don’t smoke anymore.”

One added inspiration for Kevin staying tobacco-free is his upcoming wedding on January 6, 2025. Kevin says it’s easy to choose living with his non-smoking partner over having cigarettes in his life.

“As someone who’s gay, Hispanic and a former addict, I feel like becoming tobacco-free is a victory over Big Tobacco,” Kevin said. “The manufacturers know marginalized communities already have hurdles to achieving optimal wellness, yet they market heavily to us anyway. Fortunately, I now feel free and unchained to the addiction. Living tobacco-free is liberating; I can breathe again and taste things. I don’t ever want to go back to cigarettes.”

Anyone may contact the NY Quitline by calling **1-866-NY-QUITS** (1-866-697-8487). They can also visit nysmokefree.com to connect with a specialist through an online chat, request a call-back or [order free nicotine replacement therapy medications](#). The NY Quitline

additionally offers a [free texting program](#) to quit smoking or vaping, by **texting QUITNOW** (English) or **DÉJELO YA NY** (Spanish) to **333888**.

The NY Quitline wishes everyone a happy and healthy 2025 and beyond. Caring and trained Tobacco Treatment Specialists are available seven days a week to offer support for a life-changing tobacco-free journey.

** The term tobacco throughout this press release refers to the use of manufactured, combustible commercial products and vape products – not the sacred, medicinal and traditional use of tobacco by Native American nations and other Indigenous groups.*

About the New York State Quitline

The New York State 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 those who use commercial tobacco and vape products to talk with their healthcare professionals and access available Medicaid or health insurance benefits for medication support. All those who live in New York State residents can contact the Quitline seven days a week for free coaching and resources. Text QUITNOW (English: *Learn2QuitNY*) or DÉJELO YA NY (Spanish: *Vivir sin tabaco es Vida*) to 333888 to register for a multi-week text messaging program, call 1-866-NY-QUITS (1-866-697-8487) starting at 9 a.m. or visit www.nysmokefree.com for more information.

About Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center

From the world's first chemotherapy research to the PSA prostate cancer biomarker, Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center generates innovations that shape how cancer is detected, treated and prevented worldwide. Driven to eliminate cancer's grip on humanity, the Roswell Park team of 4,000 makes compassionate, patient-centered cancer care and services accessible across New York State and beyond. Founded in 1898, Roswell Park was among the first three cancer centers nationwide to become a National Cancer Institute-designated comprehensive cancer center and is the only one to hold this designation in Upstate New York. To learn more about Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center and the Roswell Park Care Network, visit www.roswellpark.org, call 1-800-ROSWELL (1-800-767-9355) or email ASKRoswell@RoswellPark.org.

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