



***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**

### Media Contact

Tony Astran, MPA, APR, TTS (*he, him, his*)

New York State Quitline

716-982-2088 (cell)

[anthony.astran@roswellpark.org](mailto:anthony.astran@roswellpark.org)

- *Melvin T., age 58, overcame both cancer and nearly 40 years of smoking menthol cigarettes*
- *NY Quitline and My Hope 2020 clinic helped Melvin become tobacco-free*
- *Those in New York State can contact the NY Quitline seven days a week for free support*

## **MANHATTAN RESIDENT OFFERS INSPIRATION FOR THOSE LOOKING TO BECOME TOBACCO-FREE IN 2025**

*New York State Quitline provided free support to Melvin T. of Washington Heights*



**Jan. 2, 2025** – *"When I battled nasopharyngeal cancer, the doctor told me I had three months to live. But today, I'm cancer-free and also tobacco-free. Anyone who quits cigarettes will feel like they have a new lease on life, just like me."*

These are words of wisdom from 58-year-old Melvin T. (*pictured*) of the Washington Heights neighborhood in Manhattan, who has enjoyed three years of tobacco\*-free living with free assistance from the [New York State Quitline](#) (NY Quitline). Melvin hopes his story will inspire others to pursue a tobacco-free lifestyle for 2025 and beyond.

Melvin moved to New York City from the country of Jamaica at age 17 to study pre-med at CUNY Hunter College. News from back home soon crushed his mental health.

"I learned some things about my family that deeply saddened me," Melvin recalled. "I dropped out of college and started smoking menthol cigarettes as a way to cope."

Although Melvin eventually navigated a different career path and even managed a CVS Pharmacy store for many years, he could not shake his two-packs-daily addiction to menthol cigarettes. In 2017, Melvin learned news that sent his life into a tailspin.

"My doctor informed me I developed Stage 4 [nasopharyngeal cancer](#) and had three months to live," Melvin said. "I went crazy. Instead of smoking less, I smoked more and started drinking heavily."

Fortunately, Melvin soon received help from a nearby clinic called [My Hope 2020](#). The staff treated him for depression and alcohol use, and Melvin also participated in group sessions to share his stories and monitor health progress.

Melvin also worked on cutting back his use of menthol cigarettes. While learning breathing and meditation exercises at My Hope 2020, one of Melvin's counselors, Peter Mills, recommended contacting the NY Quitline for additional support and resources.

"What I valued most about the (NY) Quitline was their empathy," Melvin said. "Their follow-up calls gave me the support I needed to quit. Today, I'm three years tobacco-free and, amazingly, also cancer-free. I'm supposed to be dead; now, I have a new lease on life."

Melvin currently resides in Washington Heights and hopes to find a residence of his own in 2025 and rejoin the workforce. "I'm grateful for the support I received from both My Hope 2020 and the (NY) Quitline," he said. "Hopefully I'll soon begin a work-from-home job, because I'm happiest when I'm working and busy."

Anyone may contact the NY Quitline by calling **1-866-NY-QUITS** (1-866-697-8487). They can also visit [nysmokefree.com](https://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](http://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](http://www.roswellpark.org), call 1-800-ROSWELL (1-800-767-9355) or email [ASKRoswell@RoswellPark.org](mailto:ASKRoswell@RoswellPark.org).

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