



***NOTE TO MEDIA:** Please contact us anytime to arrange an interview with any of our experts, tobacco control partners throughout New York State and/or Success Story participants. Our press releases are available in downloadable PDF format at our Online News Room: <https://nysmokefree.com/news-room>.*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

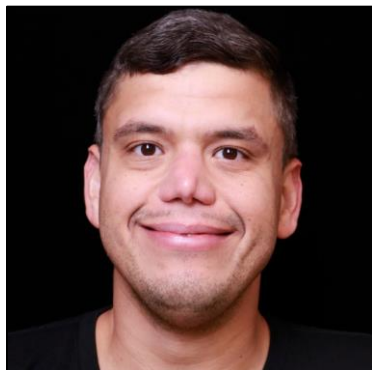
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- *Gaston L.'s story can provide inspiration for those wishing to become tobacco-free* in the New Year*
- *39-year-old Ithaca resident overcame cigarettes in May 2025 through the NYS Quitline*
- *NYS Quitline offers free support, including coaching, medications and texting programs*

THIS NEW YEAR, RESOLVE TO BE TOBACCO-FREE WITH SUPPORT FROM THE NEW YORK STATE QUITLINE

Gaston L. of the Finger Lakes Region celebrates nine months of freedom from cigarettes; saw NYS Quitline ad shortly upon moving to the U.S.



Jan. 2, 2026 – With the start of 2026 comes another opportunity to tackle life’s resolutions. For many New York State residents, overcoming nicotine addiction and becoming tobacco-free* will be a top priority. The [New York State Quitline](#) (NYS Quitline) reminds everyone free support is available seven days a week and thousands of people achieve success each year. Gaston L. (*pictured*), a 39-year-old resident of Ithaca in the Finger Lakes Region, is a

“Success Story” and can offer inspiration for anyone trying to quit.

Gaston, an engineer by profession, likes to solve problems. When he would hit a roadblock at work in his native country of Colombia, he would take a cigarette break.

“I started smoking at parties in college, then thought I needed them for mid-terms, and eventually I increased my usage to one and a half packs a day,” Gaston recalled. “Over time, smoking became associated with my job. Cigarettes are cheaper in Colombia and I was around more people who smoked.”

When Gaston followed his wife to the U.S. in January 2025 for her post-doctoral research career at Cornell University, he ran into another roadblock – but this one improved his health.

“I had to wait to receive my work permit, so I was temporarily unemployed,” he said. “Between needing to save money and my wife worried about my health, it made all the sense in the world to become tobacco-free.”

Reflecting on more than 20 years of smoking, Gaston joked that he was good at quitting. “I quit every night,” he said, “but then I would go right back to smoking.” This time, however, he had extra sources of inspiration. First, he intended the carton of cigarettes he brought to Ithaca from Colombia to be his last tobacco products. Second, unlike Colombia, his new friends in the U.S. did not smoke, which helped him avoid triggers. Finally, an ad for the NYS Quitline was one of the first things he saw on television upon arriving in Ithaca.

“I thought it was fantastic the Quitline offered free nicotine patches and gum, as well as support,” he said. “I’m thankful I saw the ad. I don’t think I would have been able to quit on my own. Along with the help from the Quitline, my wife was my biggest supporter. I knew if we’re going to have children sometime soon, I first needed to become healthier.”

Gaston’s day used to begin with about five minutes of bad coughing. Today, he feels recharged and has better stamina for walking and running. He encourages everyone who smokes to try to quit – or to try again – and to use the free NYS Quitline services.

“I never tried quitting because I always feared how hard it would be and thought I’d just go back to smoking,” Gaston said. “But you can learn from attempts that aren’t initially smooth. Once you succeed, you gain health and a better future. Follow the instructions with the free medications and don’t be afraid to try.”

Anyone seeking assistance to become tobacco-free may contact the NYS Quitline by calling **1-866-NY-QUITS** (1-866-697-8487). They can also visit nysmokefree.com to reach a specialist through an online chat, request a call-back or [order free nicotine replacement therapy medications](#). The NYS Quitline additionally offers [free text-support programs](#) by visiting www.DropTheVape.org and by **texting QUITNOW** (English) or **DÉJELO YA NY** (Spanish) to **333888**.

The NYS Quitline encourages all New York State residents to try – or try again – to become tobacco-free in 2026. More “Success Stories” like Gaston’s are available at a new webpage, www.nysmokefree.com/success-stories. The stories, which are searchable by primary reason for quitting, type of tobacco product overcome, location and age can offer inspiration to never give up and reclaim healthier living.

** The term tobacco throughout this press release refers to the use of manufactured, combustible commercial products and electronic/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 supported by 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 NYS Quitline encourages those who use commercial tobacco and electronic/vape products to talk with their healthcare professionals and access available Medicaid or health insurance benefits for medication support. Confidential texting programs with weekly guidance for skill-building are available by texting QUITNOW (English) or DÉJELO YA NY (Spanish) to 333888 or by visiting www.DropTheVape.org. All those who live in New York State can contact the NYS Quitline seven days a week for free coaching and resources by calling 1-866-NY-QUITS (1-866-697-8487) or by visiting www.nysmokefree.com.

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. The Roswell Park team of 4,000+ makes compassionate, patient-centered cancer care and services accessible across New York State and beyond. Rated “Exceptional” by the National Cancer Institute, Roswell Park, founded in 1898, was one of the first NCI-designated comprehensive cancer centers in the country and remains the only one 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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