

Gilbert smoker quits with county help

By Cary Aspinwall

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Don't tell Fay Eisen that it's too hard to quit smoking.

Yeah, yeah, it's hard, she knows. There are temptations left and right, and stressful situations that will make you want to start back up no matter how long ago you quit.

But Eisen said she did it, so anyone can.

Eisen said the push to quit came a few months ago, at 61, after decades of smoking on and off.

The Gilbert woman said she woke up one morning and her face was frozen on one side, her head tilted. She had a mini-stroke, her doctor said. Quit, or face more strokes, the doctor warned.

So Eisen found out about Maricopa County's free smoking cessation program. She attended the program for six weeks, and with the help of a nicotine patch, is now a non-smoker.



Fay Eisen

Funded by the Arizona Department of Health Services, the six-week program offers smokers support, guidance and 50 percent off aids to stop smoking, such as the nicotine patch.

The patch was the answer for her, along with the support given by her class instructor, who was a former smoker, she said.

"This time, I think I've beat it," she said.

An estimated 6,800 adults will die in Arizona this year from smoking-related illnesses, said Laurie Thomas, a spokeswoman for the Maricopa County Tobacco Use Prevention Program.

Arizona's tobacco tax on cigarettes is \$1.18 per pack. The money provides health care for low-income families, tobacco prevention

Need help quitting?

Maricopa County offers free smoking cessation classes for all Valley residents.

Gilbert has classes available in two locations: Gilbert Health Center near Gilbert and Baseline roads, and the soon-to-open Mercy Gilbert Medical Center at Val Vista Drive and the San Tan Freeway.

Classes offer support, guidance and coupons for 50 percent off smoking cessation aids, such as the nicotine patch.

To register: (602) 372-7272.

programs and research for the prevention and treatment of tobacco-related illness, Thomas said.

Eisen said she'd tried to quit before and had been successful for intervals as long as 10 years. But then something stressful would happen and she'd start back up.

Eisen said she started smoking as a teen behind her parents' backs. She used to smoke slightly less than a pack a day, she said.

"When I would clean the house, I would be out of breath," she said. "Instead of being 61, I felt like 91."

Now she said she can clean the whole house without feeling sick. She can climb stairs easily. Food tastes better. Her relationship with her husband, who's a non-smoker, has improved, she said.

Now that Eisen's not dropping \$4.56 per pack of cigarettes, she's got money to spend on fancy lotion and manicures to reward herself.

"If you want to live and you don't want to be sick and you want to enjoy the things in life, stop smoking," she said.