

# Oregonians are calling it quits (for tobacco use) by the thousands

The Oregon Tobacco Quit Line just received its 15,000th call from tobacco users wanting help to quit. "The Quit Line has been in operation only for 18 months, and we're proud to be serving so many people," said Clay Parton, manager of Tobacco Prevention and Education for the Department of Human Services, Oregon Health Division. "Oregon is a leader in this effort, and the system is really working well."

Stacy Duggan of Portland has used the service. "I've

been a smoker since I was 15 years old, and now I'm finally free," Duggan said. "I go for long walks, I take the kids to the park, I feel better and I look better." She smoked one pack of cigarettes a day for 15 years before quitting four months ago. "The Quit Line was there when I needed answers. I don't think I could have done it without the people on the other end of the line," Duggan said. "The thing that makes me feel really good about quitting is that my kids are no longer exposed to

secondhand smoke. This has done wonderful things for my self-confidence. I am like a new person."

This specific program is available only in Oregon. A few other states offer quit lines and Washington State and Montana are considering similar programs.

Every day, dozens of smokers phone the Quit Line to get help from a trained counselor. These counselors analyze the caller's tobacco use patterns and help them identify upcom-

ing stressful events and coping strategies. Together they develop a personal quitting plan.

Ani O'Hara, Quit Line Director, believes that this personal approach is the key. "A lot of people want to quit. There is social and financial pressure. Cigarettes cost a lot of money and people want to spend their money in ways that give them more pleasure," said O'Hara. Cigarettes cost as much as \$3 per pack.

In addition to a personalized quit plan, callers receive an

"Oregon Tobacco Quit Kit" in the mail. Inside the kit is a worry stone and other helpful tools to keep smokers' hands busy. Doug Pitts is a smoking counselor with the Quit Line. "What we find is that people tend to have something to pull on, unwind or bend. Anything to keep their hands busy helps because a lot of smoking behavior involves manipulation," Doug Pitts said.

The Oregon Tobacco Prevention and Education Program is a comprehensive effort to reduce the use of tobacco and exposure to secondhand smoke. It includes programs in local communities, schools, businesses, media and special populations. The program is funded by a tobacco tax increase approved by the voters in 1996. Ten percent of the new revenue is allocated to tobacco use prevention and reduction. Oregonians who are ready to quit tobacco, call toll-free 1-877-270-STOP (English) or 1-877-2NOFUME (Spanish) or 1-877-772-6534 (TTY).

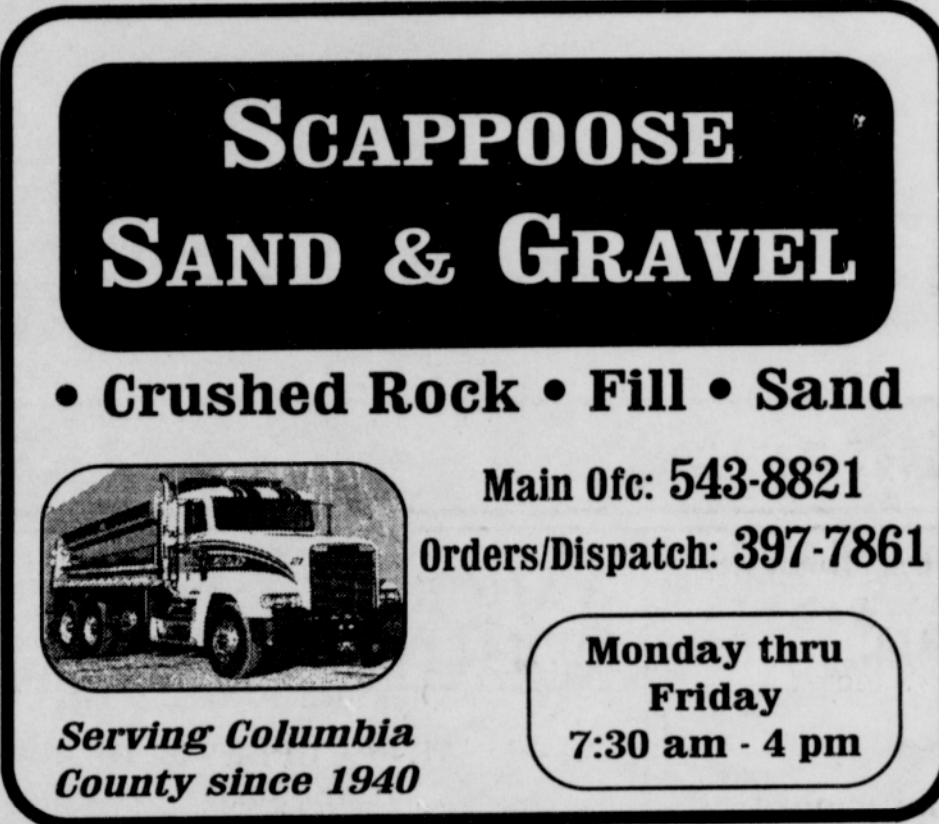
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