

# Families need to help smokers quick

The good news is that millions of smokers across the United States quit their tobacco habits Thursday in the American Cancer Society's Great American Smokeout.

The bad news is that the majority of quitters were puffing away again on Friday.

"Unfortunately, many smokers will fail because their families, friends and associates won't give them proper support and encouragement," said Michael Samuelson, president of the National Center for Health Promotion, which sponsors Smoke Stoppers, the largest hospital-based smoking cessation program in North America.

"The percentage of American adults who smoke — 28 percent — is greatly reduced since five years ago," he said. "We're now dealing with 'hard-core' smokers who are more addicted and need more support than the smokers who quit in previous years."

According to Samuelson, using scare tactics to convince smokers to quit is one of the biggest mistakes family members and friends can make.

"Smokers get defensive and anxious when you tell them they're killing themselves or they'll get lung cancer," said Samuelson.

"Their conditioned response to anxiety and stress is to smoke more." The National Center for Health Promotion offers the following tips for helping smokers quit:

1. Understand the difficulty of quitting smoking. People smoke for positive reasons, including physical comfort and emotional relief. The

choice to smoke is not an intellectual one.

2. Be patient. Smokers are physically and psychologically addicted. They need understanding, compassion and time.

3. Highlight the benefits of becoming a non-smoker. Smokers perceive (emotionally and physically) that

smoking is beneficial. Emphasize that once the smoker quits, he or she will feel better, look better and enjoy an improved quality of life.

4. Avoid scare tactics. Scare tactics make smokers feel guilt, shame, anger and/or fear. To cope with these feelings, smokers often smoke more.

5. Provide ongoing support and unconditional respect. Make it clear to the smoker that your friendship, love, respect or admiration will not be jeopardized based on the success or failure of his/her attempt to quit smoking. In many cases, smokers fall repeatedly before successfully quitting the tobacco habit.

## Consumers offers hook-up break

In a new effort to offer natural gas service to people in outlying areas, Consumers Power Company has asked the Michigan Public Service Commission for approval of a billing practice change.

The proposal would permit groups of new gas customers — either residential, commercial or industrial — to pay gas line extension costs over a five-year period, instead of paying all of these costs prior to the hook-up taking place. Consumers Power serves almost 3 million of the state's

residents with natural gas. Under the proposal, the utility estimates that several thousand homeowners and businesses in suburbs and rural areas will choose natural gas service.

"Natural gas has been, and is, significantly more economical than other energy alternatives. In spite of this price advantage, some new gas customers are not being provided the gas service they want," said Michael G. Morris, executive vice president of natural gas for Consumers

Power. "This proposal gives groups of new gas customers the option of paying their main extension charges over a 5-year period, rather than paying those charges beforehand in one lump sum," Morris said.

The billing practice change is particularly attractive for residential home contractors, because it would ensure lower costs for vital heating and gas service.

About 20 gas extension projects have been identified that would ben-

efit from approval of this program. The proposal also notes that the utility's existing gas customers may benefit because additional gas customers would spread Consumers Power's fixed system costs over a larger sales volume.

Consumers Power Company, the principal subsidiary of CMS Energy Corporation, is the nation's eighth largest gas distribution utility serving 215 cities and villages including suburban Detroit and 40 of the 68 Lower Peninsula counties.

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