



# Parish of Ascension

OFFICE OF THE PARISH PRESIDENT

TOMMY MARTINEZ  
Parish President

## **National Prevention and Cessation of Tobacco Use Day Slated**

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Executive Director, Ascension Counseling Center

GONZALES –Parish President Tommy Martinez announced that Sunday, May 12, 2013 will be recognized as National Prevention and Cessation of Tobacco Use Day in Ascension Parish.

The national day is celebrated in every state and is promoted by the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. [Smokefree.gov](http://Smokefree.gov) is an online site that gives four steps to quitting: 1. Thinking about quitting, 2. Prepared to quit, 3. Quitting and 4. Keep on quitting.

1. Thinking about quitting includes all the reasons you should quit - The American Cancer Society states that 30 percent of all cancer deaths in Louisiana are directly caused by tobacco use. Cigarette smoking is the leading preventable cause of death in the United States. On average, tobacco users die 13 to 14 years earlier than non-smokers. For every person who dies of a tobacco-related disease, 20 more people suffer with at least one serious illness from tobacco. People who stop tobacco use greatly reduce their risk of dying prematurely. Stopping tobacco use will put you on a path to a healthier you! If you quit smoking right now...
  - Within 20 minutes: Your heart rate and blood pressure drop.
  - Within 12 hours: The carbon monoxide level in your blood drops to normal.
  - Within 3 months: Your circulation and lung function improves.
  - Within 9 months: You will cough less and breathe easier.
  - After 1 year: Your risk of coronary heart disease is cut in half.

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-After 5 years: Your risk of cancer of the mouth, throat, esophagus and bladder are cut in half. Your risk of cervical cancer or stroke returns to normal risk levels.  
-After 10 years: You are half as likely to die from lung cancer. Your risk of larynx or pancreatic cancer decreases.  
-After 15 years: Your risk of coronary heart disease is the same as a non-smoker's. In addition to the health benefits, you will also save money, be proud of yourself, create a healthier environment around you, and be a better role model for your children.

2. Preparing to quit - Just thinking about quitting may make you anxious. But your chances are better if you get ready first. Quitting works best when you're prepared. Before you quit, **START** by taking these five important steps:  
S=Set a quit date.  
T=Tell family, friends and coworkers that you plan to quit.  
A=Anticipate and plan for the challenges you'll face while quitting.  
R=Remove cigarettes and other tobacco products from your home, car and work.  
T=Talk to a professional counselor about getting help to quit.
3. Quitting - Call Ascension Counseling Center to join their free eight-week stop smoking group. The group is open to all Ascension Parish residents. Group members will receive the nicotine patch free of charge. Participants will receive strategies for quitting and self-help material. Director Suzanne Hamilton with the Ascension Counseling Center said that 36 percent of people who reach the end of the eight-week class have quit smoking entirely, 45 percent down by half or more, and 16 percent smoke less.
4. Don't quit quitting - Beating an addiction to nicotine takes a lot of willpower and determination. You should feel great about yourself no matter how far you make it. Quit as many times as you need to.

You can quit today. To sign up for the next Stop Smoking program, call the group facilitator, Lisa Weber-Curry, at (225) 450-1172 or visit the Ascension Counseling Center website for more information at [www.ascensionparish.net/MH](http://www.ascensionparish.net/MH).

Ascension Counseling Center can offer free programs such as this one because it is supported by a 2 mil parish property tax. Ascension Parish is one of only three parishes in the state that provides support for mental health and substance use services. The Stop Smoking program is sponsored by Ascension Parish Government, Capital Area Human Services District (CAHSD), and the American Lung Association.

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