



Parish of Ascension

OFFICE OF THE PARISH PRESIDENT

TOMMY MARTINEZ
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Ascension Counseling Center Stop Smoking Classes Now Forming

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GONZALES – The Ascension Counseling Center is now opening enrollment for an 8-week, stop smoking class for parish residents. The class is being offered free of charge.

Director Suzanne Hamilton, with the counseling center, said the classes are available for residents 18 years and older. She said nicotine patches are also offered free of charge to those taking the classes.

“What we are doing is recruiting residents to join these classes so we can help them stop smoking,” Hamilton said. “We now even offer these classes to groups. If a company, school, agency, or any situation can form groups of at least five people, then we will offer to travel to their location to conduct the classes.”

According to the American Lung Association, cigarette smoking is the number one cause of preventable disease and death worldwide. Smoking-related diseases claim over 393,000 American lives each year. Smoking cost the United States over \$193 billion in 2004, including \$97 billion in lost productivity and \$96 billion in direct health care expenditures, or an average of \$4,260 per adult smoker.

Hamilton said numbers from last year’s classes showed 36 percent of people who reached the end of the 8-week class had quit smoking entirely, 45 percent cut down by half or more, and 16 percent cut down by less.

Lisa Weber-Curry, clinical manager and trained smoking cessation facilitator, said participants will receive strategies for quitting and other self-help material.

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“We will offer many support tools including healthy coping skills strategies,” Weber-Curry said. “We want those trying to quit to know they are not expected to put down their cigarettes on the first week of class.”

She said other support tools include relaxation videos and a technique for quitting developed by the American Lung Association called Pack Tracks. Pack Tracks are scoring sheets or cards that the smoker carries in the cellophane wrapper of their cigarette pack. By filling out the card each time they light a cigarette, they are registering their feelings and responses at the time they smoke the cigarette.

Furthermore, according to the American Lung Association, smoking cigarettes often entails a great deal of unconscious smoking. Studies suggest people may find that they often smoke automatically without fully realizing what they are doing or how they are feeling. This version of Pack Tracks was developed by the American Lung Association and is a useful tool to help the person to better understand – or bring to their consciousness – their smoking behavior. Pack Tracks can be used for a week or even just for one day.

“By offering these classes, we are empowering residents to give their best effort at quitting,” Hamilton said. “Group members tell us that the free nicotine patch, support from the group leader, and being in a supportive group of people who are all trying to quit are the most helpful things in the class.”

Classes are held on Tuesdays, 4 p.m. – 6 p.m. at 1112 S.E. Ascension Complex in Gonzales,

To sign up for the Stop Smoking program, call the group facilitator, Lisa Weber-Curry at 225-621-1114.

The Stop Smoking program is sponsored by Ascension Parish government with grants from Capital Area Human Services District and the American Lung Association.

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*Please see attached graphic

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