

# Mr. Ciggy wants you to kick ‘butt’ during Great American Smokeout Campaign

By Penny Randall  
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There was a moment when Jerri Mixon realized she must stop smoking.

“There were several things, but the biggest was the fact that my little girl -- who is now seven and does not remember this -- looked at me and said, ‘Mommy can I have a cigarette?’ I knew then it was time to stop, if not for myself, then to be a better role model for my children,” said Mixon, an administration clerk at Training Squadron Nine on board NAS Meridian.

In celebration of the Great American Smokeout set for Nov. 18, several people who have conquered smoking share stories of success in a desire to motivate others to stop smoking for good.

When it came to medical problems, Mixon immediately noticed a change in her children more than herself.

“My children are not as sick as they used to be when I smoked,” Mixon said. “I did not smoke around them, but the smell bleeds through the ‘smoke jackets’ and it is still on the rest of your body and comes into contact with the children and everyone else.”

“Overall I feel healthier. I no longer plan my moments around buying cigarettes. I keep up on what is new about the dangers of smoking so that I can make informed choices about being around smokers for me and my family.”

On April 21, 2009, David Watkins quit smoking after 37 years.

“The support I got from family and co-workers helped me the most,” said Watkins who works in the Management Information Department at Naval Branch Health Clinic Meridian.

In addition to family and friends, Watkins credits the Freedom from Tobacco class taught several times a year at NBHC Meridian.

“The class gave me the tools and assistance to quit,” Watkins said. “I breathe easier now, I don’t get out of breath as quickly as I did when I smoked – plus I have more money to spend on things other than cigarettes.”

Troy Field, a retired chief petty officer who now works at Fleet and Family Support Center, stopped smoking in September 2007 after 23 years.

“I remember Shelly Atwood telling me I would ‘die a young man if I didn’t quit,’” Field said. “That day was a turning point for me.”

Field also suffered from excessive coughing and high blood pressure which all contributed to the transient ischemic attack, known as a mini-stroke he suffered in August 2007.

Since then, Field’s health has improved but he still has side effects from his years of smoking.

“You have to want to quit more than you want to smoke,” Field said. “I don’t smell like an ashtray anymore. I do not go out in the rain or cold just to light up either. I can just watch from inside and feel sorry for the folks that do.”

Field is also a graduate of the Freedom from Tobacco class.

“It was a wonderful curriculum taught by very caring folks,” Field said. “Your first and best support group is formed by attending the class.”

NBHC Meridian plans to hold another Freedom from Tobacco Class in January 2011. The six-week class consists of classroom work and a group question and answer session. The class begins with each student getting weighed, having their blood pressure checked, and taking a carbon monoxide breath test. In addition to the morale and emotional support of the class, students can have prescription medicine to assist them in quitting tobacco products. The most common are nicotine gum or patch, and the pill Chantix.