

Day is dedicated to helping smokers give up habit

BY MARGARET BEHM
Staff writer

Today health aides and friends of smokers are hoping to adopt a smoker and encourage him or her to quit as part of the Great American Smokeout.

Becky Stewart worked at the Great American Smokeout booth sponsored by the University Health Center in the Nebraska Union on Wednesday. Stewart is one of 87 health aides at the booth Wednesday and today.

Stewart has been smoking a pack to a pack and a half of cigarettes per day for several years and plans to quit smoking permanently today.

"I'm quitting because I know smoking is bad for me," said Stewart, a junior psychology and pre-physical therapy major. "I know I need to quit now before I get more addicted and it's harder to quit."

Andy Link, marketing coordinator of the Health Center and instructor of the Smoking Cessation class that will begin in the fall of 2000, said Stewart is not alone in her tobacco use.

"Depending on what research you look at, 20 to 29 percent of the students that attend this university smoke," Link said. "That's (5,000) to 6,000 students, and we have the possibility to

create better health for their future."

Students can adopt a smoker at the union booth. The smoker receives adoption papers and survival kits, including stickers, buttons and a tip sheet to help them quit. Last year, 237 smokers were adopted, said Jennifer Snyder, who works at the Health Center.

"A lot of times all it takes is someone to help you out to quit smoking," Snyder said. "It's better because it's a team effort so the smoker isn't alone."

Snyder encouraged students to adopt a smoker because smoking is not a healthy habit. It affects everyone because even secondhand smoke can be harmful, she said.

"If you're concerned about your health and the health of your friends, you should help people quit smoking," Snyder said. "That will make this a healthier university."

Stewart tried to quit last summer, but it only lasted a week. With the help of her friends, she said she is confident that this time she'll quit for good.

"I'm more serious this time," Stewart said. "Plus a lot of my close friends are trying to quit, too, and that helps a lot."

Stewart decided to quit because of the expense of smoking. Smoking a pack of cigarettes a day, at about \$3 a pack, equals more than

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University Health Center worker

\$1,000 per year, she said.

Stewart also decided to quit because of the health risks. Eighty percent of lung cancer is a result of smoking, according to the American Cancer Society's Web site.

"It's pretty much guaranteed that smokers will see the effects of their smoking in their future," Link said.

Smoking-related diseases killed 462,938 Americans in 1998; that was more than car accidents, homicide and alcohol-related deaths combined, said Dana Dyksterhuis, public relations specialist for the American Cancer Society.

If a person stops smoking before cancer develops, the damaged lung tissue starts to gradually return to normal; when a smoker quits, the risk of getting lung cancer is half that of people

who continue to smoke, according to the American Cancer Society.

"The sooner you quit, the more years you truly add to your life," Dyksterhuis said. "Hundreds of thousands of lives could be saved if people stop smoking."

The American Cancer Society is using the Great American Smokeout as an opportunity to also educate youth about the dangers of smoking, Dyksterhuis said.

This is important because although smoking among adults decreased from 21 to 14 percent in 1998, smoking among adolescents is on the rise, Dyksterhuis said.

"An event like the Great American Smokeout gives students an excuse to quit," Dyksterhuis said. "Sometimes all it takes is a reason to quit."

ITI employees received no notice before closing

■ Former employees will get one last paycheck; company was not legally required to give notice.

BY SARA SALKELD
Staff writer

No advance notice was given to the 71 people who lost their jobs in Lincoln last Friday when Lincoln's Idelman Telemarketing Incorporated unexpectedly closed its doors.

ITI is a telemarketing firm owned by APAC Customer Services in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

The Lincoln office at 809 P St. closed because of a decline in its number of clients, which has caused some employees to head for the unemployment office.

David Reiners, manager of Corporate Communications for APAC, said the company was not legally required to give the employees any notice.

The Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act protects companies only if they have 100 or more employees, Reiners said. With only 71 employees, the company was not required to give any notice.

The reason for this location's closing was because there was a "need to consolidate operations into Omaha due to capacity issues," Reiners said. The number of hours worked by employees compared with the amount of money ITI-Lincoln's clients were bringing in was not enough.

Reiner said ITI's employees were encouraged to commute to the

Omaha ITI office. He said if they chose to relocate, no seniority would be lost. APAC is offering no commuter compensation.

Former employee Topher Charnley's impression of the unemployment situation was slightly different.

He said there was no encouragement to transfer to Omaha. He also said those who did change locations would be able to keep their benefits but all seniority would be lost.

The former employees would, however, receive one more paycheck. This will be a two-week paycheck based on the average time worked in the past 12 weeks.

While commuting may be an option for some, Charnley estimated about 10 percent of the employees were students.

Charnley said there were no numbers for ITI employees to call last week, meaning there was no work.

On Friday, two separate meetings were held, one each for the day and night shifts.

During these meetings, a letter was given to each employee, explained in about 10 minutes, and ITI employees left as former employees, Charnley said.

The letter given to the employees said little more than the situation was out of the company's control, and it wished it could have told the employees sooner.

For Charnley, that meant he headed straight for the unemployment office. He said there had been a lot of people in the unemployment office from ITI.

Charnley, who had worked for ITI for almost three years, said dejectedly: "It's just in time for the holidays."



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