

# A WCC Woman's Story And The Effects of Smoking

By: Cathy Annas, WCC Tobacco Use Prevention Coordinator

Tobacco use has been identified as the leading cause of premature death and disease in the United States and North Carolina. Scientific studies have concluded that cigarette smoking can cause chronic lung disease, coronary heart disease, stroke, and cancer. According to Richard Carmona, former U.S. Surgeon General, "The scientific evidence is now indisputable: secondhand smoke is not a mere annoyance. It is a serious health hazard that can lead to disease and premature death in children and nonsmoking adults." Cigarette smoking plays a major role in the mortality of U.S. women. Each year throughout the 1990's, about 2.1 million years of the potential life of U.S. women were lost prematurely because of smoking-attributable diseases and women smokers who die of a smoking-related disease lose on average 14 years of potential life according to the 2001 Surgeon General's Report on "Women and Smoking."

And some myths associated with women and smoking with answers that follow.

- It's not hurting anyone but me. Secondhand smoke causes at least 35,000 deaths a year in nonsmokers according to the Center for Disease Control (CDC).
- It is better to smoke; if I quit, I will gain weight. Some people do gain weight when they

stop smoking. Others do not. According to the American Lung Association you would most likely have to gain 80 or 90 pounds to do as much damage to your health as smoking one pack of cigarettes a day.

- I have tried to quit, but I just can't. It is your body and your life. Some who quit say that it is both the hardest and the best thing they have ever done.

Judy Parsons, a student in the human services program, started smoking at age 14. "I believed I looked cool and would fit in better with friends. I became addicted to smoking cigarettes and the nicotine they contained. I thought if I quit, I would gain weight and the other kids would think I was not cool anymore. I did not realize the first time I lit up a cigarette, the danger and harm I was doing to myself and others around me. I had no idea that cigarettes contained so many cancer-causing agents and chemicals. With every draw I inhaled, those ingredients collected in my lungs and with every exhaled smoke and the side stream smoke from the end of my cigarette, I was affecting those around me. As a result of my smoking, I developed a life-threatening lung disease called bronchitis obliterans. It would not leave me much time to live, if I did not make some changes. The only cure would be a lung transplant. My doctor explained to me that I would not live to see my youngest daughter start school if I did not stop

smoking. I was harming not only myself but my children, the ones I loved the most in the world. After 24 years of smoking, I quit smoking "cold turkey." I did notice changes in myself after a few days. I could smell and taste food better. I coped by chewing a lot of gum and straws because I did not want to gain more weight. My routine was to get a cold glass of water, look up on the shelf at my medicine bottles, and then look at a picture of my two girls. After a month, the smell of a cigarette made me sick. I am thankful to have a longer life. The enjoyment of spending time with my family that I would not have had if I had not stopped smoking."

There are numerous resources available to help one quit smoking. The Quitline NC provides free support from 8am to midnight, 7 days a week. Trained tobacco cessation coaches are available to help create a personalized plan to help you quit. Call the Quitline NC toll-free at 1-800-QUIT-NOW. Individual assistance is also available by contacting Cathy Annas, WCC Tobacco Use Prevention Coordinator at ext. 6462.

*Cowardly Lion: Courage! What makes a king out of a slave? Courage! What makes the flag on the mast to wave? Courage! What makes the elephant charge his tusk in the misty mist, or the dusky dusk? What makes the muskrat guard his musk? Courage! What makes the sphinx the seventh wonder? Courage! What makes the dawn come up like thunder? Courage! What makes the Hottentot so hot? What puts the "ape" in apricot? What have they got that I ain't got? Dorothy, Scarecrow, Tin Woodsman: Courage! Cowardly Lion: You can say that again! Huh!*  
~E. Y. Harburg, from the film *The Wizard of Oz* (1939)



Sherry Thompson, counselor associate at the Ashe Campus, received the Appalachian State University's prestigious Women of Influence Award. The award, presented by ASU's Women's Center, recognizes "women who have made a difference in the lives of others or made other significant contributions to the world in which she lives."

Learning is like a jigsaw puzzle. When you first lay the pieces out, it doesn't make much sense. When you start to connect the pieces, you then begin to see how it all fits together.  
-Anonymous

## WCC receives \$75,000 in grant funding to reduce tobacco use among area college students

The NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) has awarded Wilkes Community College \$75,000 in grant funding for Phase II of its Tobacco-Free Colleges Initiative to combat tobacco use among students at Wilkes Community College, Ashe Campus of Wilkes Community College, and Alleghany Center of Wilkes Community College. The grant is for a 30-month period that began January 1, 2008.

"Too many of our young people are smoking in college and are exposed to second-hand smoke on campus," said Lt. Governor Bev Perdue, HWTF chair. "We must raise awareness about the dangers tobacco poses to our health, lower use by emphasizing prevention, and help current smokers to quit."

Tobacco use has been identified as the number one preventable cause of premature death and disease in the country. While teen tobacco use has been declining in North Carolina over the past decade, smoking among 18-24 year olds has increased steadily. Over a quarter (28%) of 18-24 year old North Carolinians smoke, representing the highest smoking rate across all age groups in our state.

The Tobacco Free Colleges Initiative has been expanded in this second phase to provide assistance to all NC campuses in adopting and implementing comprehensive, campus wide tobacco use policies. This program will be similar to HWTF's highly successful 100% Tobacco Free Schools Initiative, which worked with all 115 school districts to create 100% Tobacco Free School policies. As a result of this effort, all of the state's 115 school districts will pass and implement 100% Tobacco Free School

policies by August 2008.

The HWTF-funded Tobacco-Free Colleges Initiative became operational in January 2006, and in Phase I awarded grants to 20 organizations working with 58 college campuses in North Carolina. A recently released report issued by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill concluded that the initiative was successful in its first year with policy gains, new campus coalitions, increased QuitlineNC promotions to young adults, and strong support from college officials.

Wilkes Community College will work to prevent the initiation of tobacco use, promote tobacco use cessation, and eliminate tobacco-related health disparities among area college students ages 18-24. In addition, funds may be used to eliminate exposure to second hand tobacco smoke on campus.

The full list of grant awards can be viewed at <http://www.healthwellnc.com/hwtfc/pdf/files/GranteeList-TFCCollegesII.pdf>.

**About the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund**  
The NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund makes North Carolina stronger, both physically and economically, by funding programs that promote preventive health. Created by the General Assembly in 2000 to allocate a portion of North Carolina's share of the national tobacco settlement, HWTF has invested \$143 million to support preventive health initiatives and \$102 million to fund prescription drug assistance programs. For more information, please visit [www.HealthWellNC.com](http://www.HealthWellNC.com)

## New Faces at WCC

Whether you've needed a transcript request, placement test, or just wanted to play ping pong, if you've entered the doors of Alumni Hall within the last four months, you've probably noticed two new faces. Jane Owens Weaver and Jessica Mitchell were hired by WCC at the beginning of January, and they are seen frequently in the halls, hanging posters, talking to students, and promoting campus events.

Jane Owens Weaver joins the Wilkes Community College staff as the new Student Activities Coordinator. She organizes student activities, advises SGA and Cougar Cry, and assists with admissions in Student Services.

Jane brings a breadth of knowledge and experience that is a product of working at the Ashe Campus for a year and Surry Community College for thirteen years prior. In addition, her expertise with students transcends all types of demographics, including her work with at-risk teens and as a coordinator for TRIO, a federally funded program for first generation college seekers. Jane's open mind and welcoming demeanor offers a warm platform for student suggestions, opinions, and ideas. Her overall goal is to strengthen the involvement of students in



activities on campus and offer events that are both enjoyable and educational.

Jessica Mitchell was hired in January as an Admissions Representative and Athletic Coach. Her main job responsibilities include informing high school seniors of the benefits of Wilkes Community College,



organizing recreational activities, intramurals, and coaching. Jessica is the assistant coach of the women's basketball and volleyball teams. Jessica graduated from Wilkes Central in 2003 and attended Davidson College where she played four years of basketball for the Lady Wildcats. Jessica graduated from Davidson in May of 2007 and is eager to impart the knowledge and experience she gained from college athletics into the student athletes here at WCC. Jessica hopes that her recent graduation from a four year college will elevate her ability to communicate with the students at WCC.

Wilkes Community College is proud to have Jane Owens Weaver and Jessica Mitchell as a new addition to their family.