

Linda Small: A N-O-T® Success Story

PITTSFIELD, NH: Every day in America, about 3,000 young people start smoking. Unless they are able to stop, a third of them will eventually die from smoking-related illnesses. In New Hampshire, about 25% of high school students are daily smokers. Linda Small of Pittsfield was one of them.

Two years ago, Linda was a high-school sophomore at Pittsfield High. She was a daily smoker, and struggling to quit. Sometimes she was able to cut down to only a few cigarettes a week, but she was unable to quit entirely.

Before long, Linda started to realize that smoking “wasn’t fun anymore.” She was a member of the softball team, though smoking left her so out of shape that she was unable to run the mile to the softball field. This, coupled with the trouble her smoking was getting her into at school, caused her to think that maybe it was time to quit for good.

So she joined the Not On Tobacco® program offered at her school by facilitators trained by the American Lung Association of New Hampshire. The program, run by Lois Treloar, a special-ed teacher at Pittsfield High, and Noreen Falzone, a former school nurse, strives to educate teen smokers about the dangers of smoking and to aid them in their attempts to quit.

That year, the school put on two N-O-T® programs, with a total of 16 students. Of these 16 students, the end of program quit rate was 29%. The facilitators of the program are aware of at least two students, Linda included, who are still smoke-free. Another two students cut their daily cigarette intake in half.

Two years later, Linda is a senior at Pittsfield High, and she is thankful to the N-O-T® program for helping her quit. “It was wicked hard to quit,” she says in typical New Hampshire fashion. “Before the N-O-T® program, there was no one there to help me out.” Linda stuck with it and eventually conquered her addiction. She has continued to play softball and now runs cross-country. While before she was unable to run a mile, she now is able to run a 5K race.

Today, Linda is helping Lois Treloar organize the next N-O-T® program at Pittsfield High. Together, they are trying to recruit more students. This new program will be run by Ms. Treloar and school nurse Pat Serafin. Linda says that it is initially tough to recruit new students because none of them wish to admit that they smoke, but to those students she gives this advice: “It is tough, but don’t give up, because it feels really good not to have to need a cigarette anymore.”