

**NEWS RELEASE**

**June 8, 2009**

**MASON COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH**

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**TO: KMAS, KRXY, SHELTON-MASON COUNTY JOURNAL, THE OLYMPIAN, SHELTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, NORTH MASON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, CITY OF SHELTON, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL, THE SUN**

**RE: Calls to Tobacco Quit Line Increase from Mason County**

More people in Mason County are trying to quit smoking using the state's toll-free Tobacco Quit Line. In April 2009, 46 people called the quit line, compared to an average of 20 calls per month last year—a 130% percent increase. Many people were prompted to quit when a new federal tobacco tax went into effect on April 1, raising the cost of a pack of cigarettes by 62 cents.

“The increase in the cost of tobacco is another good reason to kick the habit,” said Mason County Public Health Director, Vicki Kirkpatrick, “We want people to know that free help is available, when they're ready to quit.”

Mason County Public Health promotes cessation through the Tobacco Quit Line as part of its tobacco prevention program. Other program activities include: keeping tobacco out of the hands of minors through retailer compliance checks and ensuring smoke-free environments in public places and places of employment.

The Tobacco Quit Line —1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-877-2NO-FUME in Spanish) — is funded by the Department of Health and is a crucial part of the state's efforts to reduce tobacco use. Anyone in Washington, regardless of insurance status, can receive at least one coaching call free of charge. Callers speak with a trained quit coach who will help them identify their smoking triggers and develop a personal plan to quit. They also receive a quit kit with helpful information about setting a quit date and coping with withdrawal symptoms and stress. Information and interactive tools to help people quit using tobacco are also available at [Quitline.com](http://Quitline.com).

Since the Washington State Tobacco Prevention and Control Program began in 2000, the adult smoking rate has declined from 22.4 percent in 1999 to 16.5 percent in 2007. Mason County's adult smoking rate has also declined from 27.8 percent in 2004 to 21.3 percent in 2007. Washington has the 6<sup>th</sup> lowest smoking rate in the nation.

Vicki Kirkpatrick, Public Health Director