

Our Work is Personal

Focus on Lisa Underwood

Our team is made up of dedicated professionals who are passionate about their work - so much so that they often take our message "home" with them. Our staff can often be found sharing information on the harms of tobacco in all aspects of their life – whether it be at their children's schools, town hall meetings or their places of worship. In this issue, we get to know Lisa Underwood, Faculty Secretary, a little better and find out how she makes her work "personal."

Q: What brought you to work at the Tobacco Dependence Program?

A: I wanted to work closer to home for a non-profit community organization. Once I started here at the Program, I noticed the Show of Hands display on the wall. (This display depicts hands painted by individuals who have lost a loved one to tobacco use.) Right away, I realized that the harmful effects of tobacco had impacted my life as well.

Q: Has tobacco use affected you personally or your family?

A. It has affected my family in the worst way, both my mother and father started smoking as teenagers. My mother stopped smoking in her late twenties. Unfortunately, both of them died from tobacco-related illnesses and they didn't get the chance to meet or share the joys of their grandchildren and now great-grandsons.

Q: How have you incorporated the work of the Program into your life?

A: It's very easy to incorporate the mission of this program in my life because it lines up with my personal values and beliefs, which are to help those in need. I am part of a community that has an underserved population and people struggle with finding resources to help them achieve goals. My motto is to reach people where they are and that's in the community in which I live. I participate in events after work and on weekends. The first health fair I participated in on my own was at a church and about seven people came to the clinic for help. I've also worked extensively with the New Brunswick School district doing Health Fairs. I've been a member of the New Brunswick Alternate High School's Leadership Committee for four years. I regularly participate in Church events, which include health fairs, drug & Alcohol self help group & the Women's Conference.

One activity that I'm particularly proud to be a part of is the March of Dimes Walk America. I've been participating in this Walk America for 2 years and I am currently the unofficial team leader for my family. It came to my attention through March of Dimes and TDP that the African American community has a large number of premature births and infant mortality and smoking cause's problems during pregnancy and babies born to a smoker may be very sickly. As a family, we

decided to wear TDP T-shirts to advertise the clinic. Essentially, idea of saving babies by treating their mothers - and my own grandchildren! - were my inspiration to advertise a great program to help mothers quit smoking.

Q. Outside of your position, you are not required to represent the TDP. So what makes you do this on your own?

A. I am inspired on a daily basis by the work our clinicians do and the benefit of quitting smoking. It troubles me to see people suffering from a lack of information that would otherwise afford them an opportunity to make healthy or better choices in life.

Q. As a result of your "extra" efforts, have you been able to help anyone else quit smoking or do you know of someone who has quit by attending our program?

A. I can't take credit for someone quitting smoking; however, I am very happy to see people from my community come in for help. One of the other benefits of my job is developing relationships with young people who come through summer internship programs. I'm able to educate young people in the community and offer them an avenue for community service as well. Attending community events has also facilitated collaborations and partnerships with organizations in the community and increased participation in our clinic as well as our

5-day & Youth Quit2Win trainings.



The Underwood Family (Lisa is holding a white tote) at the March of Dimes Walkathon, April, 2007.

Some Key Facts from the March of Dimes:

- **NJ's preterm birth is 17.4 % and infant mortality rate is 13:1per 1000 births.**
- **A developing baby receives the nutrients it needs through the mother through the placenta, and any harmful substance such as tobacco, alcohol and other drugs pass in this way from the mother's bloodstream in to the baby's bloodstream.**
- **Smoking this includes second hand smoke, reduces the oxygen and nutrients that reach the fetus**
- **Smoking mothers are more likely to have miscarriages and still births, as well as a variety of pregnancy complications.**
- **Babies of smokers are more likely to be smaller than normal, and SIDS is more common in the homes of smokers.**