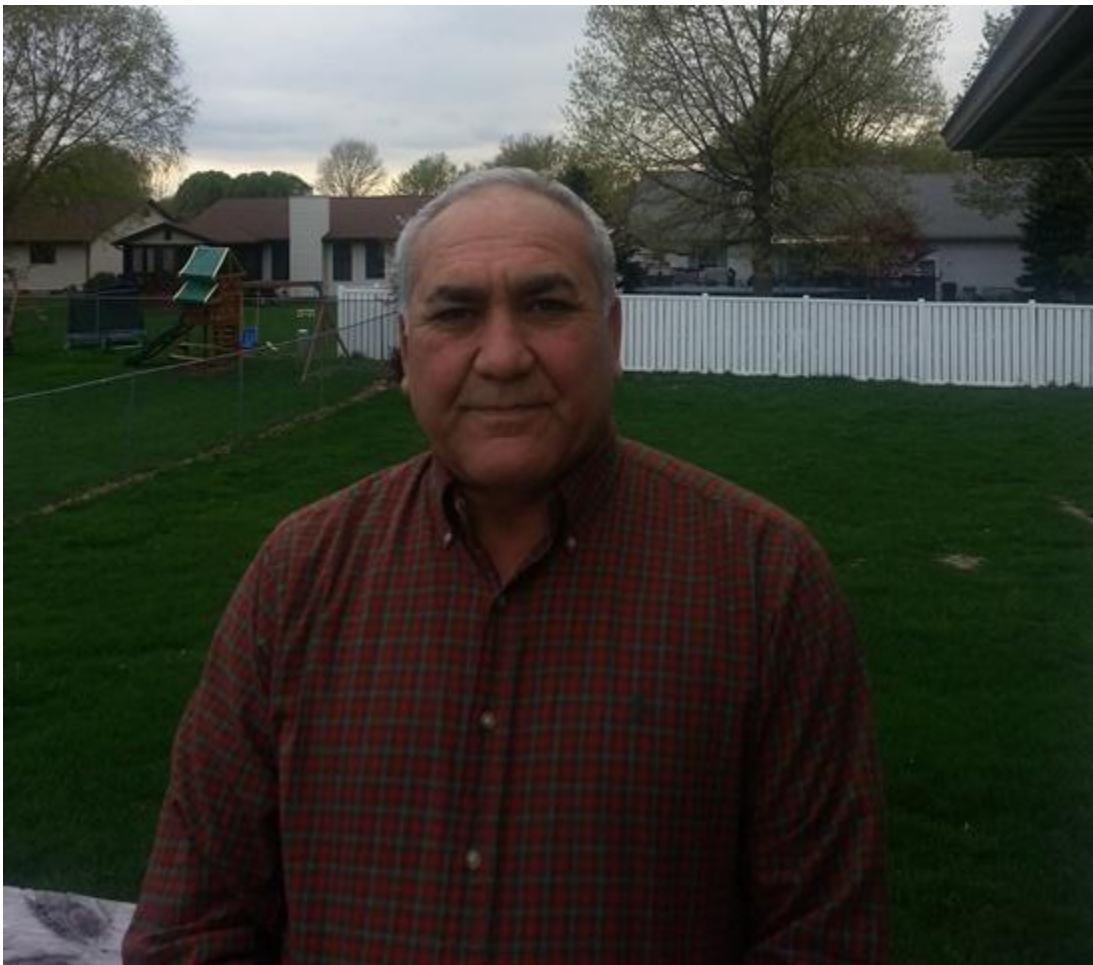


Bethalto Man Finds Freedom From Smoking

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(Alton, IL) – OSF Saint Anthony’s Health Center will be offering the American Lung Association’s “Freedom from Smoking” program starting on Monday, April 20 at 6 p.m. in the Auditorium of OSF Saint Clare’s Medical Office Building, 815 East Fifth Street.

Long time Bethalto resident, Ali Moradi, attended the January-March session and has been smoke free since February 9 – an impressive accomplishment for a 40-year, pack a day smoker.

“I started when I joined the military. The first night we were at the barracks, my new friends went outside to smoke. I went, too. I thought it would be cool,” Moradi said. “It was the whole situation. They had just shaved my head, my uniform was too big and I was away from home. I was nervous and the stress got to me. The first one just about killed me. I thought I was going to throw up.”

Moradi said he got over the initial sickness and quickly became a pack a day smoker. At first, the nicotine, a drug the American Lung Association ranks with heroin and cocaine for addictive qualities, offered Moradi a false friendship. Later, it became a bitter enemy.

“In the last 40 years, I have quit at least 20 times,” he said. “I tried patches, nicotine gums and even hypnosis. Each method would help for a month or two.”

He realized those methods did not address his trigger – stress. Nicotine signals the brain to produce dopamine, a hormone that produces a heightened sense of awareness and contentment. Like so many, Moradi had become addicted to the nicotine.

As an example, Moradi said, “I used to coach soccer. If the officials missed a call, after the game I would be searching for someone in the parking lot with a cigarette. There were times I would have paid \$100 for a cigarette.”

His strategies included buying a pack and letting a co-worker hold them, only smoking in the garage and even prescribed medication. Nothing seemed to work. He endured a continual dialogue between his willpower’s internal voice and the addiction’s powerful replies.

After a doctor’s visit where Moradi learned how bad of shape his lungs were in, he decided to try a different approach utilizing prescribed medication and the “Freedom from Smoking” program.

“Cigarettes were killing me. My family would get sad every time I went out to the garage. I have always wanted to stop for them,” Moradi said. “I read the book and talked to other people in the class – that really helped. I quit a week before the class quit date.”

Moradi did not have to wait long for his willpower to be tested.

“The company I worked for was integrating with another company. I was told they could not transfer me and I was losing my job. I kept telling myself ‘just don’t go outside,’” Moradi said. “It took the whole weekend before they figured it out. The old Ali would have found someone with a cigarette.”

The smoking cessation class is facilitated by certified instructor Tina Bennett, and focuses on finding an individualized approach to stopping.

“Our main focus is helping people get their lives back,” said Bennett. “Sometimes it takes several attempts and sometimes a person can just quit. We don’t waste time with passing judgment – we just keep moving forward.”

Moradi offered the following advice to people trying to quit.

“Learn from my experience, you could save yourself years of hurting yourself,” he said. “You could take all of the money you are spending and invest it. Over 40 years, I could have saved myself a lot of money.”

To register or for more information about the free program, call the OSF Saint Anthony’s Health Resource Center at 618-465-2264.