

“Living Smoke-Free”

An older adult living in central Maine found herself facing a familiar challenge, trying to quit smoking after many years. She lived with her spouse and had long felt skeptical about classes, support groups, and nicotine-replacement options like gum. Instead, she wanted to find a path that felt more personal and meaningful. Her health care team referred her to me. As a Community Health Worker (CHW) who had faced the same battle to quit smoking, I understood the weight of addiction firsthand and offered empathy grounded in lived experience. Together, we developed a practical, flexible plan to both quit smoking together that emphasized small, achievable steps while keeping the process personal and supportive.

Over the following months, we stayed closely connected through regular visits and phone check-ins. On difficult days, when cravings felt overwhelming, I provided a compassionate ear and words of encouragement. One creative strategy we tried was simple yet powerful—using a cut straw as a substitute for a cigarette. This small tool gave her something tangible to hold, helping bridge the gap between habit and healing.

As time passed, our relationship grew into one of mutual trust and motivation. A year later, we both celebrated a remarkable milestone: living smoke-free lives. What began as a professional connection evolved into a genuine friendship built on trust, resilience, and shared purpose. Our journey shows that healing often begins with understanding and that sometimes, the most powerful solutions come straight from the heart.

Bobby-Jo’s Story