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A GRADUATE of the Skokie Valley Professional Building's Smokers Clinic, Robert Mohs (right) receives his diploma from Joel Spitzer. (Photo by Alan Sue)

## Kicking the habit

# Smokers win big at Skokie clinic

By CAROL CHRISTIAN  
Correspondent

HUNDREDS OF North Shore residents have kicked the habit at a Skokie hospital smoking clinic.

"I had smoked for 40 years and never tried to quit," said Phyllis Levy, a Lincolnwood homemaker who gave up cigarettes in July as part of Skokie Valley Hospital's Stop Smoking program. "I guess I always thought I would fail."

The clinic's graduates tell their success stories at the six-evening seminar now held monthly because of growing demand. Joel Spitzer of the hospital's Good Health Program conducts each clinic.

"This guy gave me his card and made me promise to call him — no matter what time it was — before I took a puff," said Jean Honorff, a Lincolnwood financial planning adviser who stopped smoking in 1981. Honorff had smoked for 30 years and had tried "four or five" times to quit.

OTHER PARTICIPANTS support Spitzer's efforts. Linda Walberer, office manager for a Chicago car dealer, says she decided to come to the November clinic when Spitzer made a "house call" on her boss, who had stopped smoking through the clinic.

Nate Blumenthal of Lincolnwood, a panelist who smoked for 46 years, said of Spitzer, "Let me tell you about this little guy here. He's someone special and, pal, you have my thanks from the bottom of my heart."

Spitzer doesn't stop for personal praise, but races on with his

rapid-fire barrage of suggestions and questions.

"How many are calmer now than when you were smokers? Remember when I asked you that the first day? You thought, 'What a line.' How many have more energy? That sounds like a contradiction in terms — calmer but more energy," said Spitzer.

BY THE end of the evening, Spitzer has talked so much and so fast that his lips are white and cracked, but he is still smiling broadly and chats with people as they leave.

"You really believe him when he says he wants to help you," said Lou Gladden, a Loop insurance representative who smoked "at least 40 years."

Spitzer's efforts to help people stop smoking include daily phone calls to each clinic participant and follow-up mailings to everyone who quits.

Since he began keeping computerized records four years ago, 2,200 people have attended the clinics, Spitzer said. According to follow-up surveys of participants in 13 clinics, 50 percent "are still clean" a year later.

AS FOR success rates for other types of stop-smoking programs, Spitzer said, "They're lucky if it's 20 percent. The competition doesn't know what they're doing. We don't advertise and can't meet the demand we have."

Spitzer, who has never been a smoker, used to conduct for the American Cancer Society, but he left because Skokie Valley al-

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## Great American Smokeout

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lowed him the opportunity to put together "a more comprehensive program with a follow-up component. We have people who went through the clinic seven years ago

who are still getting mail from us."

A spokeswoman for the Illinois division of the Cancer Society said, "We provide free materials and training and encourage hospitals to use it."