



ter circle. When he heard this, Special Agent Tommy Ray, a state law-
 officer in Polk County, Fla., got inspired. Two years later, he made his own
 deck of cards [39], each bearing information about a different local criminal
 case that had gone cold. He distributed the decks in the Polk County jail.
 His hunch was that prisoners would gossip about the cases during card
 games, and somehow clues or breaks would emerge and make their way to
 the authorities. The plan worked. Two months in, as a result of a tip from
 a card-playing informant, two men were charged with a 2004 murder in a
 case that had gone cold.

In July of this year, the idea took off: all state inmates in Florida now
 have access to two different decks of cards, describing a total of 104 cold
 cases. In mid-October, based on a tip from an informant at the Columbia
 Correctional Institutional Annex in Lake City, the police arrested a man
 with a connection with a Fort Myers murder in 2004. The informant requested
 a reward money. Plans are now in the works to make decks of cards for
 Florida county jails. And police departments elsewhere in the country
 are instituting similar programs.

Jack Levin, a sociologist and criminologist at Northeastern University
 who has written a book on gossip, is cautious about declaring the cards

a success. "This is a clever experiment," he says. But to know if it works
 he goes on, "you'd need to put some fake cases in there, to know how the
 inmates respond to those. Right now, this will solve a case here and a case
 there, but at a huge cost of wild-goose chases, paperwork, false hope and
 even the possibility of false convictions."

Of the 66 tips he has received, Ray says he is confident about 15 and
 excited about 4. "These cases are cold," he says. "Any information is better
 than no information." RICHARD MORGAN

QUITTING CAN BE GOOD FOR YOU America is a success-minded nation. Perse-
 verance is practically a national resource. Posters of mountain climbers
 that read "Winners Never Quit, and Quitters Never Win" might as well
 be state-mandated signage in grade-school classrooms. But new research
 suggests that success — or more specifically, the persistence required to
 achieve hard-to-reach goals — may not be worth it.

In a paper published in the September issue of the journal *Psychologi-
 cal Science*, Gregory Miller of the University of British Columbia and
 Carsten Wrosch of Concordia University found that teenage girls who
 are unable to disengage themselves from trying to attain hard-to-reach
 goals exhibited increased levels of the inflammatory molecule C-reactive
 protein (C.R.P.), which in adults is linked with diabetes, heart disease and
 early aging [40]. "There's this traditional idea in Western culture and sci-
 ence literature that being persistent is good, that if you work hard, you
 can achieve anything," says Miller, who has published several papers with
 Wrosch on the psychology of quitting. "Our take is that persistence is
 good, but there are times where the most adaptive thing is to say, 'This
 goal is not going to work out.'"

At the outset of their experiment, Miller and Wrosch asked each teen-
 age subject what would count for her as adversity and what would count
 as success. Then the researchers tracked how the young women dealt with
 their own setbacks and adversity over the course of a year. What mattered,
 it turned out, was not whether the subjects achieved success but what they
 had to endure to get there. "We found that the girls who were best able to
 disengage when a goal became difficult or unattainable are those who have
 constant levels of C.R.P.," Miller says. Teenagers who persisted — even
 if they eventually attained their goals — had significantly elevated levels.
 "Success in some cases is going to be costly," he adds.

None of this is to say that persistence is a bad thing — just that too
 much of it can be unhealthy. "The million-dollar question," Miller says, "is
 where that exact tipping point is." CLAY RISEN

QUITTING CAN BE GOOD FOR YOU CHART BY CYBU RICHLI

