

## Did You Know?

Most Minnesota parents support tobacco-free policies for outdoor settings. A survey of Minnesota residents showed that 70% of adults support tobacco-free park and recreation areas<sup>1</sup>.

Most adults in Minnesota understand that secondhand smoke is dangerous. The vast majority (91%) of adults in Minnesota believe that breathing secondhand smoke is harmful<sup>2</sup>. However, 65% of adults<sup>2</sup>, 56% of middle school students<sup>3</sup>, and 72% of high school students<sup>3</sup> in Minnesota reported being exposed to secondhand smoke in the past seven-days.

Most people in Minnesota support tobacco-free policies as a way to reduce the dangers of secondhand smoke. Concern about the health hazards of secondhand smoke leads to direct support for smoke-free workplace laws. In fact, only 2% of all workers in Minnesota prefer to work where smoking is allowed<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>University of Minnesota, *Tobacco-Free Park and Recreation Study (TFPRS)*, 2004

<sup>2</sup>Minnesota Department of Health, *Minnesota Adult Tobacco Survey (MATS)*, 2003

<sup>3</sup>Minnesota Department of Health, *Minnesota Youth Tobacco Survey (MYTS)*, 2002



## Tobacco-free Parks & Recreation Areas are Working

More than 90 cities throughout Minnesota have adopted tobacco-free policies for outdoor park and recreation areas with positive results. These policies are largely self-enforcing with a combination of signage and community education about the policy.

*“Seventy-nine percent of city park and recreation directors who were surveyed said the public’s comments about the tobacco-free policy are ‘overwhelmingly positive’ or ‘mostly positive.’ ”*

—Brittany McFadden, Tobacco-Free Youth Recreation Director

### Anoka County



Working to create a healthier community.

## Tobacco Free Parks & Recreation in Anoka County



# Tobacco-free Parks and Recreation Areas Make Sense

Each year in Minnesota, more than 7,500 young people under the age of 18 become new daily smokers. More astonishingly, 118,000 youth under the age of 18 will ultimately die prematurely from smoking. Supporting tobacco-free parks and recreation areas makes sense because it sends the right message—that tobacco use is unhealthy and an unnecessary behavior.

## Children model adult behaviors.

Children who see adults using tobacco in a family-friendly place like a park or recreation area, may think smoking is acceptable and are more likely to copy the behavior. Tobacco-free policies encourage young people to make healthy choices and tell them that smoking is not an acceptable behavior. Policies also provide fewer opportunities for youth to consider smoking.

## Consistent messages are important.

Many school districts already prohibit tobacco use at their outdoor facilities. By eliminating tobacco use at all city-owned outdoor recreation areas as well, we are sending young people a consistent message about tobacco use.

## Secondhand smoke is harmful.

Secondhand smoke contains over 4,000 chemicals, 11 of which are known to cause cancer in humans. Secondhand smoke near children, youth, and adults engaging in or watching recreational activities is unhealthy and detrimental to the health of others.

## Cigarette litter is harmful.

Cigarette butts are the most common form of litter found in parks and recreation areas, making them look dirty and uninviting. They also create maintenance expenses and can be ingested by toddlers and pets playing in these areas.

## Here's What You Can Do in Your Community

Join your local tobacco-free coalition or call your public health agency to find out how you can help create tobacco-free outdoor recreation areas.

You can also help educate your community about why tobacco-free recreation outdoor recreation areas make sense:

- Tell friends and neighbors why you support tobacco-free recreation areas and ask them to join you.
- Gather support from organizations that regularly use community recreation areas.
- Distribute educational materials at community events.
- Work with your community leaders.
- Volunteer to speak to community leaders about this issue.

For more information or to join a group working on tobacco-free parks and recreation initiatives in your community, call Anoka County Health Education at 763.422.7282.

