

## **New year ushers in smokeless rides for kids**

**By Scotta Callister Blue Mountain Eagle | Posted: Tuesday, January 7, 2014 3:20 pm**

JOHN DAY – A flurry of new laws went into effect Jan. 1 in Oregon – including one that outlaws smoking in a car with kids in it, and another that boots teens out of tanning salons.

The goal of the new “smokefree car” law makes smoking in a motor vehicle when a minor – under age 18 – is present is a secondary traffic violation. “Secondary” means a police officer can’t pull over a car for that offense, but can cite for it if the driver has been stopped for some other offense.

Sheila Comer, specialist for the Grant County Tobacco Prevention and Education Program, said the law’s primary aim is to reduce children’s exposure to smoke, a known health hazard at any age.

Children, however are particularly vulnerable to the effects of secondhand smoke, and that risk is increased in confined spaces like cars, she said. In addition, studies have shown that the risk continues to be high even when a car window is open.

Children exposed to smoke are more likely to face an array of health issues including bronchitis, pneumonia, ear infections, asthma attacks and increased risk of sudden infant death syndrome.

The Oregon Health Authority estimates that children in 50,000 Oregon families are exposed to secondhand smoke in vehicles.

Health officials say the law is an attempt to decrease that exposure, and also educate parents and adults. A ripple effect may be to support adult smokers who are trying to quit, and reinforce healthy lifestyle choices for adults and children, supporters say.

Comer said her program, run through the Grant County Health Department and funded by tobacco taxes, focuses on ways to discourage smoking and tobacco use – problems that are more prevalent in Grant County than in some other places.

In the latest wellness survey of 11th graders, 12 percent of the respondents statewide said they had used cigarettes in the prior 30 days. In Grant County, it was 26.3 percent.

Grant County youth also exceed the state figures for smokeless tobaccos, or chew – 34.2 percent to 10 percent. The new law doesn’t affect smokeless products, but that issue remains a concern for Comer’s office.

### **Tanning beds off-limits for teens**

The tanning bed law prompted controversy when it was proposed, with critics saying parents – not the state – should make the call on their kids’ tanning practices.

The law was a response to concerns about rising skin cancer rates and the health risks from ultraviolet lights. It bars tanning bed use for anyone under the age of 18, without a doctor's permission.

Locally, Tammy Clark of Java Jungle and Tropical Tan doesn't expect the teen prohibition to hurt her business, which has had few teen customers anyway.

The main impact she sees is in record-keeping. Tanning shops now must check ID for customers who look like they are under 26, to make sure no minors slip by. Clark plans to be vigilant on that – "I'm not going to put my business at risk," she said.

However, teens still have options, she noted. The shop also offers spray tanning, which is legal for kids and popular with adults who don't want exposure to ultraviolet rays.

"It's an instant tan – you walk out nice and brown," Clark said.

And there's more

Also new in 2014:

- Up in smoke: Cigarette taxes will go up 13 cents, to \$1.31 per pack.
- Text this: Fines will rise by \$142 to \$500 for drivers caught texting on the road. The max for the first offense is now \$250, while repeat offenders face fines of up to \$500.
- Treatment options: Minors at least age 14 can get outpatient diagnosis and treatment for mental or emotional disorders and chemical dependency, without parental involvement.
- Passwords: Employers and colleges can't demand your password to social media accounts.
- Leashed: Tying up a dog for more than 10 hours a day, on a choke chain, or without adequate shelter is now illegal.
- Shots: Parents must provide a doctor's note to exempt their children from vaccinations; this one goes into effect in June.

– OPB contributed to this article.

Trying to quit?

Here are some resources if you're trying to kick the smoke habit.

Oregon Tobacco Quit Line: 1-800-QUITNOW (784-8669)

American Lung Association HelpLine: 1-800-LUNG-USA

Grant County Tobacco Prevention & Education Program: 541-575-0429

Freedom from Smoking Online: [www.ffsonline.org](http://www.ffsonline.org)