

## A successful tobacco prevention effort

One of the meetings I attend regularly is the Local Alcohol and Drug Planning Committee (LADPC). The first time I attended I was very vigorously verbally attacked by two members, both smokers, over my promotion of the idea that tobacco should be included in their field of attention to drug problems in the community. After the meeting several other members, privately expressed support to me, though they did not during the attack. I think it is important to separate the person from the belief, and I continued to attend meetings, report on, and ask for support for tobacco prevention activities. Over the years the sentiment has changed to one of acceptance of the inclusion of tobacco as a drug problem.

Last spring, a member of the LADPC, the local police chief, asked for some support from committee members for the National Night Out event that he was helping to organize. I asked him if he would consider making the event tobacco free. He brushed off my request jokingly. However, I persisted and he said that I should contact him and we would talk about it. My first few emails went unanswered. Then I got an email saying that I would first have to talk with the City Manager, since the event was to be held in a city park and being tobacco free would require the consent of the city. After meeting with me, the City Manager agreed that I could take the issue to the Council and that I should make a formal written request. He was very doubtful that it would pass.

We had had previous experience with the North Bend City Council. Most people felt that we would not be successful. The Council is notoriously anti tobacco regulation. However, I was able to get commitments from several people to attend the meeting and to speak out if they wished. The Public Health Administrator agreed and asked me to prepare testimony for her to present. A number of members of a group called the Coos County Friends of Public Health agreed to be there. I had previously been the advocacy chair of the board of that group, a position that helped me develop some champions. Some members of the LADPC also agreed to attend. I would say that usually about 1 person will attend for every 30 that say they will. This time we had about a dozen people show up.

I contacted both the local TV news and a journalist from the local newspaper, so that we would be sure to get coverage and so that the councilors would feel the pressure of public scrutiny. I prepared a short, 8 slides, power point presentation. I attempted to use as much of my framing training as possible. The first slide was a very cute picture of my two and a half year old grandson asleep, cuddling his toy trucks. I explained to the city council that my grandson, Sawyer, was one of their constituents and that I was there to ask for their help. That I wanted Sawyer to grow up in a community that valued the health of our children, where he would have the best chance of growing up to lead a healthy, productive and prosperous life. I talked about the importance of role modeling. I

talked about the results of surveys we had done at public events showing that the great majority of Coos County residents felt that family friendly events should be smoke free. I talked about empowering that majority and creating positive social norms through appropriate use of public policy. My final slide was the same as my first slide of Sawyer.

The final vote was 5 to 2 in favor of a tobacco free National Night Out event policy. The policy was read at a subsequent meeting. It stated that the event was to be tobacco free "in perpetuity". The shock was such that the North Bend City Council's decision prompted an hour long discussion on the Lars Larson show the following day.

There were several members of the City Parks Committee in attendance. They indicated their approval of my presentation. We have since approached that committee and were successful in getting them to pass a resolution supporting our bringing a proposal to make all North Bend City Parks tobacco free. That campaign is currently in process. A precedent has been set.