

Medford Citizens Enjoy Tobacco Free Parks

Jane Stevenson

Summary

Medford City Council has provided places and programs that improve the quality of life for our residents by making all Medford city parks tobacco free. They have already invested significantly in the parks system and are protecting that investment. Through adoption of a tobacco free ordinance the Council is promoting the health of our community, environment and the city's bottom line.

Tobacco-free parks will save us money by reducing maintenance costs, lowering the risk of fire, and lessening the health impact of tobacco use—which costs our county more than \$83.8 million each year. Tobacco-free parks can even help individuals save money. The average smoker spends more than \$1,500 a year on the deadly habit. Tobacco-free parks can help them quit and put that money to better use. Cleaning up cigarette butts is expensive. Rich Rosenthal, Medford recreation superintendent, said the ban will clean the air and help keep the ground clean.

Challenge

Going fully tobacco-free, versus smoke-free is a smart business decision and a growing trend. We remove the need to change policy and signage down the road, and help prevent youth from using tobacco in any form. This is particularly important in Jackson County, where an increase in alternative nicotine products use is on the rise, and as the tobacco industry increases marketing of alternative nicotine products like candy flavored electronic cigarettes to work around smoke-free laws and directly target youth.

Solution

In support of Medford's Parks and Recreation's core mission of promoting healthy lifestyles and provide healthy facilities for people to use the City Council banned smoking in all their Parks and other city facilities. On a unanimous vote, the council passed the ordinance banning lighted tobacco products, lighted tobacco paraphernalia, as well as other lighted plant material. Excluded items lighted pipes, hookahs, cigars, and cigarettes. Also, any device such as electronic cigarettes are prohibited. Anyone violating the smoking and tobacco ban would be subject to a fine of up to \$250.



Your Involvement is Key

The Center for Disease Control data shows that electronic cigarette use doubled among U.S. middle and high school students during 2011-2012. In response to a growing number of smoke free public spaces, tobacco companies promote novel smokeless products as a way to use tobacco in places where smoking isn't allowed or where tobacco use isn't socially acceptable. R.J. Reynolds test-marketed Snus, a tobacco that doesn't require the user to spit out, in Oregon as well as its new line of dissolvable tobacco, some of which has been dubbed tobacco candy because of its deliberate appeal to youth.

Results

Providing tobacco free places for outdoor recreation and enjoyment protects Medford residents from secondhand smoke, helps smokers quit and shows youth that tobacco use is not the norm. Eight hundred Oregonians die annually due to secondhand smoke. Secondhand smoke exposure outdoors can equal amounts in indoor spaces. Secondhand smoke exposure can trigger asthma attacks, COPD and other adverse health effects for parks users.

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Sustainable Success

There is an overwhelming demand for smoke-free and tobacco free spaces. By passing this policy, Medford has joined a growing list of parks systems across the state and country protecting health and the environment. For example, as of October 1, 2013, 875 municipalities within the United States has enacted smoke-free park laws. All parks in Deschutes County, Oregon, are 100 percent tobacco free. City of Ashland parks are tobacco free. Jackson County Housing Authority has a 100 percent tobacco free policy inside its buildings and outside on all properties. A recent News-Review survey indicates that the majority of readers are supportive of a smoke free park policy. Twenty one percent of Jackson County residents smoke—much higher than the state average. New research indicates more than two-thirds of American adults support smoke-free outdoor public places. Councilor Eli Matthews said "citizens can enjoy breathing fresh air, cleaner and healthier parks."