

July 2011 Grantees and Contractor's Smokefree Housing: Janet Jones, Umatilla County Public Health

*In Umatilla County we have met with landlords at their property on a one-on-one basis and also helped our Housing Authority go smokefree. Here are a few other things that have helped us make connections through other avenues.*

**Pendleton Apartment Watch:** Community Services Officer Ryan Lehnert, with the Pendleton Police Department, started this group a year and a half ago. When I was visiting with a local apartment manager (who had gone smokefree) she mentioned that this group had just gotten started and invited me to share information with them.



Their monthly meetings are basically an informal round table meeting where apartment managers can brainstorm and share frustrations and solutions with each other and law enforcement. Their original goal was to open more communication lines and help each other in reducing the amount of problems with tenants in apartment complexes. We have a lot of small complexes with no on-site manager and duplex and house rentals with out of the area owners but often managed locally. Finding a way to reach those local managers of smaller properties is important.

It has been a win-win for both groups, as most apartment managers now welcome police presence in their complexes instead of dread it. It has been a real bonus for me because I've gone from being an outsider to just one of the group that always gets to share the latest updates on smokefree housing. Complexes that have gone smokefree continue to share how well their policy is working with other complexes that have not made the decision to go smokefree. Officer Lehnert occasionally brings in speakers like the Fire Marshall and the former head of our Rental Association (which is not currently active.)

One other thing I've noticed is the turn-over in management at some properties. This gives me an opportunity to share things I've already brought, and I find that this also helps as reinforcement for those seasoned managers. From the Quit Line to medical marijuana to e-cigarettes, they're always interested in updates. I'm hoping that I might be able to promote something similar in other towns in our county with property managers and law enforcement (or other organizations that might mutually benefit by meeting face-to-face with housing folks.)

One avenue I may pursue, (and I know has worked elsewhere in several counties including Douglas & Clackamas) is a connection to property managers through the fire department. They want to reduce fires and make sure that rentals have smoke detectors. Putting on a joint meeting with the TPEP coordinator possibly providing the lunch is one way to catch busy people with two important messages. The fire department gets to talk about preventing fires, (and so do we) while we talk about the benefits of smokefree housing. The added benefit is that the fire department also gets to hear about all the resources we have available for property managers to help them go smokefree and they may be more likely to refer people to you.



**Lunch and Learns:** Our Community Action Program of East Central Oregon (CAPECO) is another group that works with landlords and clients. CAPECO offers a full complement of housing options including one-time rental assistance, long term rent subsidies and homeownership education services. We have partnered with them to put on “Lunch and Learns” for property managers with CAPECO bringing in Fair Housing and other experts, while we share success stories and tools for smokefree properties.

**Chamber of Commerce:** Another partner we’ve worked with is our Pendleton Chamber of Commerce. They help coordinate housing during the Pendleton Round-Up, when all the motels fill up, and people rent out their houses by the day or for the week. They have shared the form they use to give to people renting their houses and one of the prominent questions on the form is whether smoking or no smoking is allowed. More and more people are demanding smokefree housing when they travel.



Another travel connection through our chamber is our motels. Many of them were listed on Travel Oregon, but had not listed themselves as smokefree. After mentioning this to the Travel Coordinator, Yolanda Lennon, a few months later they all were listed as smokefree on the web site, /www.traveloregon.com/ (which has a link on the Pendleton Chambers main web page.)

If you don’t have a Chamber of Commerce in small towns, here’s an example from the city of Pilot Rock newsletter, “If you are aware of rentals or daycare providers in Pilot Rock, please contact City Hall. Questions are often asked about both!” Business people talk to other business people and the more frequently we can raise the issue of smokefree housing, the more likely it is that additional properties will adopt no-smoking policies.

**Realtors:** I will be using Diane Laughter’s newly developed realtor flyers and outreach material with our realtors here in Umatilla County. Over the past few years I’ve found that realtors, especially in smaller communities, almost always own rentals, and have been a great avenue to get the message out about smokefree housing.

Janet Jones, Community Health Educator, Umatilla County Public Health 541-278-5432  
janetj@co.umatilla.or.us