



Smoke-Free News

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 3

JUNE 26, 2008

Smoke-Free News changing format

Regular readers know that the Smoke-Free News has been published every other month. This is changing. We are starting a quarterly format. The next issue of the Smoke-free News will be published in September. Subsequent issues will be distributed in December, March and June.

To reduce the cost of delivery and to get the Smoke-free News to many of our readers faster than ever before, starting with the September issue we will e-mail the newsletter in electronic format to everyone on our mailing list who has provided an e-mail address. If you would like to help us save money and aren't sure if we have your e-mail address, send an e-mail to Tom Wolff (tom.wolff@co.goodhue.mn.us) and he will update your information on our mailing list.

No meetings during summer months

Thanks to everyone who attended our monthly meetings this year in Red Wing, Cannon Falls and the Kenyon/Wanamingo area. We really appreciate your active participation and value your ideas. We can't succeed without you! Our next meeting will be early in September. Details will be sent by e-mail. You can also get meeting information at: www.smokefreegc.org.

Minnesota Legislature: opponents of smoke-free air still active

When Governor Pawlenty signed the Freedom to Breathe Act of 2007 into law, many people thought that the battle for smoke-free air in Minnesota was over. This was definitely not the case at the Minnesota Legislature during this year's session that ended on May 19, 2008. Opponents of smoke-free workplaces made repeated attempts to weaken our smoke-free law.

Two bills were introduced concurrently in the Senate and the House. One was an attempt to bring smoking back to "VFW, American Legion post, and other private facilities". The other bill would have permitted smoking in bars. The bills were assigned to committee, but neither bill had enough support to be scheduled for a committee hearing during this year's session.

Opponents of smoke-free air were not

fazed by these two defeats. They made repeated attempts to add amendments to bills that were being debated on the House floor toward the end of the session. Amendments were offered several times that would have permitted fully enclosed "smoking shelters" to be built outside of bars. Another amendment would have completely revoked the Freedom to Breathe Act.

All of these amendments were defeated, but there is *still* a very vocal minority in the legislature who think our smoke-free law was a mistake. They *still* don't understand how important this health protection is for the people who work in restaurants, bars and private clubs. We *still* need to be on our guard when the legislature goes back into session in January 2009.

County-wide service project

October 1, 2008 will mark the One Year Anniversary of the start of Minnesota's Smoke-Free Law. We would like to try something new to draw attention to this milestone. We are asking you to suggest ideas for a county-wide service project. This event should:

- Give residents from all parts of the county an opportunity to participate.
- Promote the health benefits of living

in a smoke-free Minnesota.

- Benefit our local communities and/or a health related organization such as the American Cancer Society.

What kind of service project should we do? We need your ideas! Call or e-mail Tom Wolff or Susan Johnson to share your ideas for this event or to get more information (*see p. 2 for contact information*). Don't wait - contact us today!

HOW TO CONTACT US

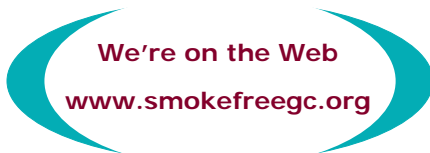
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Mary Dalbotten of Kenyon and Elizabeth Burkhardt of Lake City speaking with Senator Murphy.

At the State Capitol

A group from Citizens for a Smoke-free Goodhue County met with our state legislators at the Capitol on May 13, 2008. The purpose of the visit was to deliver a copy of the smoke-free stories we have collected from residents throughout the county. These stories tell about the benefits people have experienced since Minnesota's smoke-free law took effect.

Also making the trip to the Capitol were Carmen Bertelsen, Red Wing; Jim Davis, Wanamingo; and Mary Kay Berger, Cannon Falls. Tom Wolff and Susan Johnson led the group.

Courts are tough critics of smoking plays in bars

Real theatrical producers just have to worry about bad reviews from drama critics. The few bar owners in Minnesota who have continued to hold so-called "theater nights" also have to worry about going in front of a judge. The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) sent out a warning in March that these "smoking plays" in bars violate state law.

The first bar to be cited for violating the law was Tanks Bar in Babbitt. The local chief of police issued a citation to the owner for violating the smoke-free law. This type of citation issued by local law enforcement is a petty misdemeanor. On May 30, 2008 a St. Louis County District Court Judge upheld the citation and fined the

owner the maximum of \$300. Tank's Bar may file an appeal.

MDH has filed injunctions against the Bullseye Saloon in Elko, Bugg's Place in South St. Paul, and the Bird's Nest in Garrison. If found guilty, these bars face up to \$10,000 in fines. So far, the "smoking plays" are not getting good reviews from the judges. On May 15, 2008 a Scott County District Court judge issued a temporary injunction against smoking in the Bullseye Saloon. This may have prompted Bugg's Place to settle out of court with MDH. They agreed to pay \$1,000 in fines and stop the smoking. The cases against the other two bars continue to make their way through the courts.