

## Theodora Anderson

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**From:** Lake County Health Department [lpiotrowski@lakecountyil.gov]  
**Sent:** Friday, June 15, 2012 2:55 PM  
**To:** Theodora Anderson  
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## LakeCounty Health Department and Community Health Center

*Healthy people. Healthy choices.  
Healthy Lake County*

Lake County News Release  
June 15, 2012

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### **Waukegan Park District Goes Tobacco Free**

On June 13, the Waukegan Park District passed an ordinance making its property tobacco-free. The policy covers smoking, as well as smokeless tobacco, which includes the many new smokeless tobacco products being developed by the tobacco industry. Waukegan Park District golf courses are exempt from the new rule at this time.

In the ordinance, the Park District states that it believes parents, leaders, and officials are role models for youth and can have a positive effect on the lifestyle choices they make. In addition, the District states that the new policy will protect the health of children as well as enhance the experience of District patrons, participants and spectators.

"The Tobacco Free Ordinance passed by the Board of Commissions embodies the Waukegan Park District's commitment to the health and fitness of our residents. The use of any tobacco products near children or families who are on district properties can be offensive or detrimental to health and it does not provide good role modeling behaviors for youths," said Bill Sarocka, president of the Waukegan Park District Board of Commissioners.

Teens in the Lake County chapter of REALITY Illinois, a tobacco prevention group, played a role in the District's decision. In April, they presented information on tobacco-free parks to the board, including the benefits of tobacco-free parks for the environment, the community and overall public health. They also presented survey data they collected from 1,750 Lake County residents, including 212 from Waukegan zip codes. Survey results showed that 78 percent of the residents surveyed support tobacco-free parks in general and nearly nine out of 10 (88 percent) think playgrounds should be tobacco-free.

"It is great that Waukegan is being active in helping to keep their residents healthy and creating good role models for their youth," said REALITY Illinois member Joannah Rivera, 18. Another member added, "I am so happy that Waukegan passed the new tobacco-free policy because I strongly believe that it will prevent many teens from starting to use tobacco."

"Waukegan Park District is really taking a stand to protect the health of their community, their youth, and the environment," said Barbara de Nekker with the Tobacco Free Lake County program of the Lake County Health Department. "As the largest park district in the county, this policy can have a big impact on reducing the number of youth who ever start smoking. In the long run, this policy will save lives."

Lake County now boasts the only four park districts in Illinois that have passed tobacco-free ordinances. Waukegan, Gurnee, Grandwood Park, and the Round Lake Area Park Districts now all have tobacco-free policies. Eleven other communities in Lake County have smoke-free parks. They include Beach Park, Buffalo Grove, Deerfield, Lake Bluff, Lake Forest, Libertyville, Lindenhurst, Hawthorn Woods, Highland Park, Vernon Hills, and Zion.

Tobacco-free policies are broader than smoke-free policies since they include chewing tobacco and related litter which harm the environment, damage the health of smokers and non-smokers, and set a bad example for the community. By state law, all public school grounds are already tobacco-free. Making public parks tobacco-free as well reduces confusion about what rules apply to what parks.

REALITY Illinois is coordinated by the Tobacco Free Lake County program at the Lake County Health Department and is funded by the Illinois Department of Public Health. For more information about tobacco-free parks, or to join REALITY Illinois, contact Tobacco Free Lake County at 847-377-8090, [TFLC@lakecountyil.gov](mailto:TFLC@lakecountyil.gov) or visit [www.lakecountyil.gov/health/tobaccofree](http://www.lakecountyil.gov/health/tobaccofree).



Photo: (left to right, back row) Waukegan Park District Commissioner Pat Foley, Lake County Health Department staff Emily Zadikoff, REALITY Illinois teens Selena Sedano, Danielle Grazier, Joannah Rivera, Waukegan Park District President Bill Sarocka, Waukegan Park District Commissioners Wayne Motley and Terry Duffy, Lake County Health Department staff Barbara de Nekker (left to right, front row) REALITY Illinois teens Cesar Cardenas, Dalia Anguiano, Jennifer Takamura, and Araceli Mena.

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