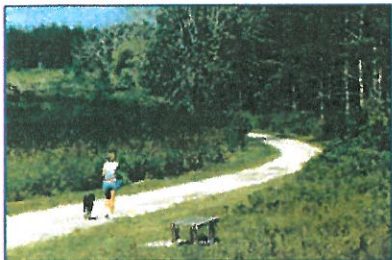


Tobacco-Free Parks Make Sense



Lake County residents use parks as a means to improve their physical fitness, enjoy time with their family, or get in touch with nature. Unfortunately, many encounter littered tobacco products and secondhand smoke while they are there. Inside or out, tobacco is harmful to your health, and the litter is harmful to the Earth. Below are some reasons why tobacco-free parks make sense.

It's Healthier.

- Secondhand smoke in outdoor public places can reach levels as high as in indoor facilities where smoking is permitted. (*Repace Associates*)
- Many nonsmokers exposed to outdoor tobacco smoke suffer immediate symptoms including breathing difficulties, eye irritation, headache, nausea, and asthma attacks.
- The Environmental Protection Agency categorizes secondhand smoke as a known human carcinogen, a cancer-causing chemical in the same category as radon, benzene, and asbestos.

It's Green.

- Cigarette butts are the most littered item in the world. They are a fire hazard, increase park maintenance expenses, and can be eaten by toddlers, birds, and other animals.
- Filters are not biodegradable and can take 5-10 years to decompose.
- Chemicals in cigarette butts, like hydrogen, cyanide, and arsenic, leak into the soil and water.

It Promotes Healthy Communities.



- **Coaches and recreational leaders become tobacco-free role models**, sending a message to youth that tobacco is not part of a healthy lifestyle.
- Tobacco-free policies establish the community norm that tobacco use is not an acceptable behavior for young people or adults.
- **Tobacco-free parks break the connection between tobacco and sports.** Sports and other physical activity improve health and reduce *preventable* disease, such as heart disease, diabetes, hypertension and cancer. Secondhand smoke and tobacco use, on the other hand, increase the risk of those same diseases.
- **Park policies create consistency for all youth recreational facilities in the community.** Tobacco use is already prohibited on public school grounds, and many Lake County communities have smoke-free ordinances covering outdoor areas. Therefore, tobacco-free park policies would help reduce confusion about which facilities are tobacco-free.
- **All tobacco-free policies encourage smokers to quit**, reduce the number of cigarettes smoked, and help former smokers remain smoke-free.

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