

THE BENEFITS OF TOBACCO-FREE PARKS

May 12, 2020 – Over the last few years, the initiative for tobacco-free parks has grown in the United States. District Health Department #10 (DHD#10) is joining this initiative within its 10-county jurisdiction to decrease exposure, and the subsequent health consequences, of secondhand smoke to the public, and to increase positive modeling behaviors around youth.

Tobacco-free parks provide many benefits to reduce tobacco use in communities:

1. Tobacco-free parks encourage healthy living

- Healthy living creates a healthy environment where people are free from the harmful chemicals and cancer-causing agents of secondhand smoke
 - Tobacco smoke contains more than 7,000 toxic chemicals
 - Exposure to secondhand smoke, from any tobacco product, can have an immediate health effect on the cardiovascular and respiratory systems among infants, children and pregnant women
- Building a tobacco-free environment will help eliminate visual and social cues for those trying to quit smoking or those who have previously done so

2. Tobacco-free parks eliminate excessive litter

- Cigarette butts are the most littered item in the country with over 175 million pounds thrown out yearly
 - Cigarette butts are poisonous to children and wildlife, are slow to decompose, and are costly to clean up
 - If a child swallows a cigarette butt or other form of tobacco, they are at risk for nicotine poisoning
 - Tobacco litter can also pose a burn risk if they are not properly extinguished, thus endangering people and wildlife

3. Tobacco-free parks can prevent children from using tobacco in the future

- Nearly 87% of tobacco users start before the age of 18
- Establishing a tobacco-free park policy will continue the norm that tobacco use is not an acceptable behavior for youth

For help quitting tobacco, visit www.livewell4health.org/tobacco-cessation or www.cdc.gov/tips. You can also call the Michigan Tobacco Quitline at 800-QUIT-NOW (800-784-8669), or contact Karen Ripke, DHD#10 Tobacco Treatment Specialist, at 231-305-8659.

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