

## Protecting Families from Secondhand Tobacco Smoke

### Who We Are

The Four Corners Partnership is a project of the local public health departments in Dodge, Goodhue, Rice and Steele counties. The goal of the partnership is to reduce the harm caused by tobacco in our four-county area.

The work described in this report was made possible through a Tobacco-Free Communities grant from the Minnesota Department of Health.



### Secondhand Tobacco Smoke Still a Problem in Multi-Family Housing

Secondhand smoke is the combination of smoke from the burning end of a cigarette and the smoke breathed out by smokers. Secondhand smoke contains more than 7,000 chemicals. Hundreds of these chemicals are toxic and about 70 can cause cancer. Since 1964, 2.5 million adults who were nonsmokers died because they breathed secondhand smoke.

Under Minnesota law, smoking is still allowed in the living units of multi-unit buildings (such as apartments, townhomes and condos). Almost 90 percent of Minnesotans have a smoke-free rule for their homes. For those who live in multi-family housing that permits smoking, having a no smoking rule for their own unit does not guarantee protection from secondhand smoke.



When one person smokes, everyone in the building smokes. Smoke can move from the smoker's unit into neighboring units, flowing through hidden cracks and gaps in the walls and ceiling.

Landlords in Minnesota have the legal authority to adopt a 100% smoke-free policy for their buildings, including the living units. Unfortunately, some landlords aren't aware that they can prohibit smoking. Many more landlords are not sure how to implement an effective smoke-free policy and don't know where to get help.

### Helping Landlords to Implement Smoke-Free Policies

We just concluded the third year of our Tobacco-Free communities grant. One goal for Year 3 was to increase the availability of smoke-free multi-family housing in our four-county area.

We worked directly with property managers and owners. Our staff built relationships, provided education to landlords and tenants, and helped landlords to implement smoke-free policies for their buildings.

We hosted three smoke-free housing workshops for landlords during Year 3. These free workshops were in a "Lunch and Learn" format



and were held in Owatonna, Red Wing, and Northfield. The guest speakers for each workshop were the director of the Live Smoke Free program and a staff attorney from the Public Health Law Center (both located in St. Paul). Our guest speakers shared their expert knowledge with landlords in our communities and answered their questions. *(See Success Stories on page 6 to read more about our work with landlords.)*



**October 2015** Q & A session at our Lunch and Learn workshop for landlords in Northfield. Presenters (L to R): Warren Ortlund, staff attorney, Public Health Law Center; Kara Skahen, director, Live Smoke Free; Tracy Ackman-Shaw, health educator, Rice County Public Health.

Our success working with local landlords continued during Year 3. Our goal was to help ten multi-unit buildings to implement new smoke-free policies. The table below shows the multi-unit buildings (apartments, townhomes and duplexes) in our four-county project area that implemented a new smoke-free policy with assistance from the Four Corners Partnership during Year 3.

Property Name	City	# of Buildings	# of Housing Units	# of Units for Low-Income Renters	Property Management
Maple Hills Apartments	Red Wing	7	96	96	CommonBond Communities
Greenvale Place Apartments	Northfield	7	96	96	CommonBond Communities
Jefferson Square	Northfield	9	50	50	Dominium
Roseview Apartments	Kenyon	3	12	12	Steve Alger
Noreen Apartments	Red Wing	2	13	0	Lee & Dorothy Noreen
	<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>254</b>	

These new policies made a significant increase in the availability of smoke-free housing for low-income renters in our four-county area (95% of the units in the table above are subsidized/affordable housing).

### Play Tobacco Free: Secondhand Tobacco Smoke in Outdoor Settings

When people smoke outdoors the smoke does not just disappear into thin air. Studies show that tobacco smoke can stay in the air near the ground and reach people who are nearby. People in outdoor settings can be exposed to levels of secondhand tobacco smoke that are just as high as levels that have been measured indoors.

Our parks, outdoor recreation facilities and fairgrounds are public places that are meant to be places that the whole community can enjoy. Secondhand tobacco smoke can create a barrier that prevents members of the community, especially those with respiratory conditions like asthma, from using these public places.



### Steele County Free Fair Now Smoke-Free

We asked visitors to our booth at the 2014 Steele County Free Fair to complete a survey about tobacco use at the fair. There were 321 completed surveys and an overwhelming 82.9% said they wanted a tobacco-free fair, including all outdoor areas on the fairgrounds.

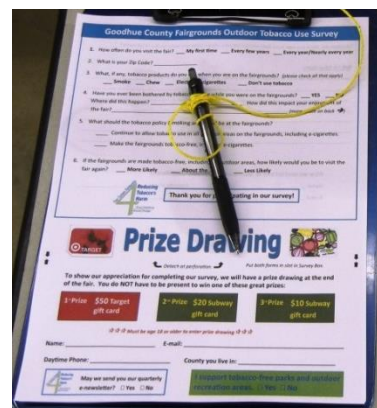
Jane Nyquist presented the results of our survey to the Steele County Fair Board early in 2015. The Minnesota State Fair and five county fairs (including the Dakota County Fair and Olmsted County Fair) already had policies that prohibit smoking or limit smoking to designated areas. The Steele County Fair Board decided to implement a smoke-free policy starting with the 2015 county fair. No smoking is permitted (including the use of electronic cigarettes) except at designated smoking areas.



### Survey Says: 85% Want Tobacco-Free County Fairs

During the summer of 2015, we asked fairgoers at the Dodge County Fair, Goodhue County Fair and Rice County Fair to complete a survey. A total of 341 surveys were completed and 85% said they would like for these county fairs to be tobacco-free (including the use of electronic cigarettes).

The surveys showed that a tobacco-free policy would not hurt attendance with 95% saying they would be “just as likely” or “more likely” to attend a tobacco-free fair. The next step will be to share the survey results with the three fair boards. We hope to see at least one fair implement a tobacco-free policy for the summer of 2016.



### Promoting Tobacco-Free Policies for Parks and Outdoor Recreation Areas

During 2015, our displays at county fairs and other public events in our four-county area included information about the benefits of tobacco-free policies for parks and outdoor recreation areas. We are starting to work with all of the communities in our four-county area to build support for tobacco-free policies for parks and outdoor recreation facilities. Over 160 Minnesota cities and counties already have policies that prohibit or restrict smoking in their parks and outdoor recreation areas.

During 2015, Steele County implemented a tobacco-free policy (including the use of electronic cigarettes) for all four county parks (see cover photo). Tobacco use is prohibited at all times except in personal vehicles in the parking lots. The City of Owatonna strengthened its existing tobacco use policy for city parks and outdoor recreation areas by prohibiting the use of electronic cigarettes.



2015 Dodge County Fair



2015 Rice County Fair

### Spreading the Word: Secondhand Tobacco Smoke is a Serious Health Hazard

Last year brought a unique opportunity to build public awareness about the danger from breathing secondhand smoke. The Minnesota Department of Health was able to offer us \$70,000 in one-time additional funding to participate in a statewide Coordinated Media Campaign. We chose a message



Billboard on Highway 14 in Claremont

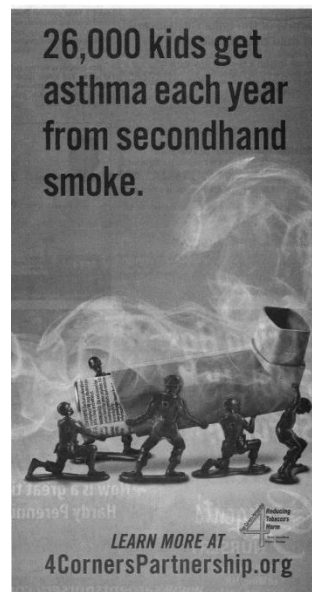


Digital billboard on I-35 in Faribault

highlighting the connection between asthma and secondhand smoke in Minnesota youth. We had six billboards that were up from February through August of 2015. We also had signs on the sides of public transit buses in Faribault, Owatonna and Red Wing from February through April. Print ads appeared in local newspapers in all four counties from February through May.



Hiawathaland Transit in Red Wing



Red Wing Republican Eagle

## Secondhand Smoke Causes Disease and Death

Children	Adults
Middle ear disease	Stroke
Respiratory symptoms, impaired lung function	Nasal irritation
Lower respiratory illness	Coronary heart disease
Sudden infant death syndrome	Lung cancer
	Reproductive effects in women; low birth weight

SOURCE: U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, The Health Consequences of Smoking 50 Years of Progress: A Report of the Surgeon General CDC Vital Signs Feb 2015 www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns