



Association for Nonsmokers - Minnesota

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32nd Annual ANSR Garage & Plant Sale just around corner

Hennepin County adds e-cigarettes to clean indoor air ordinance

*Thank you for all you
do for ANSR. Please
consider sharing this
newsletter with a friend!*

It's that time again! The 32nd Annual ANSR Garage & Plant Sale will be on May 15-16 from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. each day. Mark your calendars and get ready to join us and shop.

Again this year, we need your stuff. Best for us are small items, such as housewares, jewelry, tools, books, CDs/DVDs, collectables and decorator items. We no longer take clothing, TVs, exercise equipment or large furniture. Funds raised at the sale are essential to ANSR's mission. Do you have time to help? We always need help collecting saleable items before the sale, organizing and pricing things the day before the sale and working the sale itself. We would love your assistance. Please call Jeanne at 651-646-3005 to volunteer or talk about other ways you can help.

The Hennepin County Board of Commissioners showed strong leadership in protecting the health and safety of its residents when the board voted 6-1 to prohibit electronic cigarette use in public indoor spaces on Feb. 10. The ordinance update means the use of electronic cigarettes is not allowed anywhere smoking is prohibited, such as work places, restaurants and bars.

"Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death and disease in Minnesota, and this change is a necessary step in protecting the right of Minnesotans to breathe clean air," said Commissioner Marion Greene, a champion of the ordinance. "We are also committed to health for our youngest populations. Nicotine is addictive and affects youth brain development. E-cigarette flavors are heavily targeted to youth and normalize smoking behavior."

The recent Minnesota Youth Tobacco Survey, released in November, shows 28 percent of high school students have tried e-cigarettes, and 13 percent have used or tried them in the past 30 days. Nearly a quarter of those who have tried e-cigarettes have never tried conventional tobacco products.

Live Smoke Free team helps condo association go smoke-free

Live Smoke Free featured in pair of national webinars

“This is a huge win for public health and the people of Minnesota,” said Betsy Brock, Research Director for the Association for Nonsmokers-Minnesota (ANSR). “Hennepin County is our state’s most populated county and an economic engine for the region. This policy will protect many residents and workers. Our hope is other counties and cities, and eventually the state, will follow Hennepin’s lead.”

The Wilhite Condominium Association in Minneapolis voted to adopt a smoke-free policy for its building on March 1. The policy will include e-cigarettes and cover all indoor units without any grandfathering of current smokers.

The smoke-free condominium movement is gaining momentum but many condominium policies allow smokers to continue smoking in their units by grandfathering them in. The Wilhite sets an example by going completely smoke-free.

The Minneapolis Department of Health and Live Smoke Free worked with an owner-resident of The Wilhite whose efforts were crucial to the success of this new policy. She suffered from secondhand smoke exposure in her unit and went to great lengths to improve her situation, including sleeping with the windows open in the middle of winter. During the course of three months and with support and resources from Live Smoke Free, she served as the catalyst for the policy adoption. Thanks to this courageous owner, she and her neighbors at The Wilhite can breathe easier.

Live Smoke Free was featured in two national webinars over the past few months:

Program Director Kara Skahen participated in “Reducing Exposure: A Healthy People 2020 Progress Review Webinar Featuring Environmental Health and Tobacco Use,” hosted by the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in December 2014. Skahen discussed Live Smoke Free’s history and the success of smoke-free housing in Minnesota.



The ANSR Bulletin is published quarterly. For more information, contact ANSR at: 2395 University Ave. West, Ste. 310, St. Paul, MN 55114 or at (651) 646-3005. Permission to reprint articles with credit to ANSR granted. For an online version of the newsletter, go to ANSR’s website at www.ansrmn.org.

ANSR helps celebrate 20th anniversary of Kick Butts Day with six events

Skahen also participated in a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Townhall Teleconference in February entitled “A Breath of Fresh Air: Reducing Secondhand Smoke in Multiunit Housing.” Skahen discussed the success of smoke-free housing work in Minnesota and nationwide and took questions from smoke-free housing advocates across the country.

March 18 marked the 20th anniversary of Kick Butts Day, a day on which thousands of youth, teachers and health advocates in the United States speak up against Big Tobacco. Locally, ANSR worked with four schools from ISD 622 in Oakdale, Maplewood and North Saint Paul, as well as the ALMAS group at Henry Sibley High, on Kick Butts Day events. ANSR partnered with Minneapolis MAD DADS and Southside Urban Coalition for a Quit Cold Turkey event at the Lake Street West CVS in Minneapolis, as well.

John Glenn, Skyview and Maplewood middle schools, as well as Tartan Senior High, participated in events for ISD 622. The ALMAS (Anglos Latinos Motivated to Succeed) are in Mendota Heights.

Youth at ISD 622 schools educated their peers on the dangers of tobacco, including flavored tobacco. Students answered questions about tobacco to earn prizes and learn more about tobacco. Students learned about the dangerous chemicals in cigarettes.

In the U.S., more than 50 people die every hour from tobacco-related illnesses. The schools used shoe and balloon displays to represent this. At Skyview, 50 balloons were placed on lockers each hour through the day for a realistic view of how many deaths that would be.

At Henry Sibley High, the ALMAS group had a collection of 50 pairs of shoes to demonstrate that number. John Glenn also had shoes on display to represent those deaths. Students signed postcards to their city council members calling attention to ways to protect youth from being targeted.

Students at Skyview, John Glenn and Henry Sibley created videos to spread the word about the dangers of electronic cigarettes and how the tobacco industry uses flavored tobacco to target youth. Those videos can be found at www.ansrmn.org.

In Minneapolis, the groups encouraged people to quit cold turkey by trading in their pack of cigarettes for a turkey sandwich. There was a live radio broadcast on KMOJ-FM promoting the event and discussing the dangers of smoking. The event aimed to educate

Bill included in Omnibus Tax bill to close loophole on ‘Man Cans’

the public about the benefits of quitting smoking. It featured numerous giveaways for participants and also promoted the latest contest sponsored by QuitPlan Services, Minnesota’s help line to quit smoking.

“This event was a fun way to engage with the community, get people excited to quit smoking, and raise awareness about all the great smoking cessation resources we have in Minnesota,” said Sadie Lundquist, Drug-Free Communities Assistant Coordinator with the Southside Urban Coalition. “Our coalition is lucky to have partnerships with some fantastic organizations that are able to mobilize quickly and make events like this successful.”

Moist smokeless tobacco brands Longhorn and Kayak have a new packaging scheme to avoid Minnesota’s minimum moist smokeless tobacco (MST) tax.

A minimum tax was applied to MST products as of Jan. 1, 2014. These products are taxed at 95 percent of wholesale price with a minimum tax of \$2.90 per can, which is equivalent to the Minnesota tax on a pack of cigarettes. In most cases, the minimum tax of \$2.90 per can is much higher than 95 percent of wholesale price.

However, brands such as Kayak and Longhorn are packaging 12 cans worth of smokeless tobacco into one giant tub and applying the minimum “per can” tax of just \$2.90. As a result, these products are extremely cheap. For example, the Kayak “Man Can” retails for \$19.99 for the equivalent of 12 cans of MST. The minimum tax alone on 12 separate cans of MST would be \$34.80. Clearly, this packaging method is achieving its intended goal.

Senator Kari Dziedzic (DFL, Minneapolis) introduced a bill on April 17 that would close this “Man Can” loophole. It would provide for larger cans to be taxed per 1.2 ounces, which is the equivalent of a typical consumer-size can. It was included in the Senate Omnibus Tax bill on April 27.

St. Paul enacts licensing restrictions to deal with repeat offenders

Saint Paul again led the nation in developing a unique tobacco ordinance that should make it harder for youth to purchase cigarettes and make neighborhoods safer in the process. The council voted unanimously on April 22 on an ordinance that would revoke a tobacco license at a location for five years if they accrued four ordinance violations. A violation could include selling to a minor, selling untaxed cigarettes or criminal behavior, among others.

Tax bills dominate legislative session

The ordinance was developed by long-time friend, Councilmember Dave Thune. His goal was to give the city an extra tool to deal with problem stores, the kinds of stores that repeatedly violate city codes, then when faced with revocation, ‘sell’ the store to a brother or cousin and continue business as usual. The new ordinance applies to the location, not the owner.

Among those who testified in favor of the bill were Traielle Godfrey. The teen told the council about the issues created in his neighborhood by a problem store. After years of work, the store was finally closed. He said he worried that without the new ordinance, it would soon re-open, and all the safety issues, such as drug dealing and illegal sales, would return.

Tobacco tax related bills have dominated this legislative session and as we head in to the final weeks of the session, proposals calling for nearly \$80 million in tobacco tax cuts over four years are included in the House version of the tax bill.

Two initiatives account for the lion’s share of the proposed cuts: eliminate the automatic yearly inflation adjustment on the cigarette tax and dramatically decrease the tax on the e-cigarettes made by the major tobacco companies. Neither of these proposals are included in the Senate tax bill, so they will be up for discussion when the House and Senate conference committees meet to work out differences.

JAN

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When the legislature increased the tobacco tax in 2013, it included a provision to automatically increase the tax on cigarettes to reflect the rate of inflation.

The goal was to keep the relative tax the same and not allow it to become a lower percent of the cost of cigarettes as inflation creeps up. That inflation adjustment this January was 7 cents per pack of cigarettes.

The e-cigarette tax change shows the power of “Big Tobacco.” R. J. Reynolds has been promoting a similar bill across the country. The bill would change the way e-cigarettes are taxed. It would make the tax on the type of cigarettes manufactured by the major tobacco companies, such as Vuse and MarkTen, much cheaper than the tax on the fancier e-cigarettes sold in locally-owned vape shops.’

The proposal would give the big manufacturers a huge advantage. While ANSR does not support the vape shop products, similar products should be similarly taxed, and tax policy should not favor one manufacturer over another.

The biggest issue for ANSR, however, is that the heavily promoted products such as Vuse are sold through convenience stores and are more easily purchased by youth. Making them cheaper makes them more accessible. A recent Centers for Disease Control study found that e-cigarette use has tripled among youth in the last year.