

GETTING INTO THE ZONE

Outdoor smoke-free zones and smoke-free multi-housing units are increasing throughout the country. At any given time, states and municipalities are passing laws and ordinances to reduce exposure to secondhand smoke. Our fine state of Vermont is no exception. The Vermont Department of Health and community coalitions are working toward achieving the same goals; increase smoke-free zones and reduce exposure to secondhand smoke for all Vermonters. This initiative focuses on a variety of environments such as public places and events, workplace campuses, multi-housing units, college campuses, and vehicles that transport children and pets.

One could assume that those who are concerned about the effects of secondhand smoke are primarily nonsmokers; however, a 2010 survey by the Vermont Department of Health revealed that nine out of ten Vermont smokers agreed that secondhand smoke is harmful to others; with nearly half of the surveyed smokers believing it is very harmful. Often many people are unaware that even short-term exposure to secondhand smoke has been shown to contribute to heart attacks and asthma attacks. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention states that “for nonsmokers, breathing secondhand smoke has immediate and harmful effects on the cardiovascular system which can increase the risk for a heart attack. People who already have heart disease are at especially high risk”. In a study completed by the National Asthma Campaign, nearly 80% of asthma sufferers have had attacks triggered by tobacco smoke.

In the past year, Brattleboro Area Prevention Coalition, with the support of community partners has made great strides to promote smoke-free zones at community events and in public recreational locations. BAPC provided Smoke-Free Event lawn signs to River Valley Credit Union’s Kids Fair, Strolling of the Heifers Slow Living Expo, Twilight Music Series on the Lawn, Wellness in Windham County Health Festival and Winter Carnival’s Children’s Events. In addition to lawn signs, Brattleboro Senior Center, Putney Cares Activity Barn, and Putney Community Center have designated smoke-free areas by posting Smoke-Free Zone signs and Vernon Recreational Department has posted several signs at the town’s sport’s fields.

Recently, BAPC has mobilized an effort to increase smoke-free zones in downtown Brattleboro and provide support to downtown businesses, which desire a smoke-free storefront. Many Brattleboro business owners have been pleased to participate because they understand the many benefits to their store. Smoke-free signs prevent secondhand from wafting into their store, reduce the chance a customer may pass by the business in effort to avoid cigarette or cigar smoke, encourage a cleaner and more appealing storefront with less litter, help to improve the overall impression of the business and show employees and customers that the owners and managers care about their health.

To promote the arrival of additional downtown smoke-free signage, a sidewalk stencil project was launched during November’s Gallery Walk with the help of Brattleboro Union High School students. You can view a video of the project at www.facebook.com/BrattleboroPreventionCoalition. The Boys and Girls Club of Brattleboro, Brattleboro Memorial Library and the River Garden have had Smoke-Free Zone signage posted for awhile now, however, beginning in November, nearly thirty downtown businesses

have joined them by placing a “Thank You for Keeping This a Smoke-Free Zone” sign on display windows and doors. Businesses who have chosen to display the signs include Artrageous, At the Oasis, Brattleboro Bike Shop, Brattleboro Holistic Health Center, Brilliance, Brown & Roberts Hardware, Burrows Specialized Sports, Cynthia Reeves New England Gallery, Edward Jones Financial Investor Joseph S. LoMonaco, El Sol Boutique, Elliot Street Fish, Chips & More, Everyone’s Books, Experienced Goods Thrift Shop, Florali-Beautiful Things to Wear, In the Moment Music & Gifts, Life’s Little Luxuries, Marlboro College Graduate Center, Mystery on Main Street, Salon Jacque, Scissor Masters Salon and Tanning, Shin La Restaurant & Sushi Bar, The Shoe Tree, Silver Moon Adornments, Taylors for Flowers, Tulip Café and Creperie, Twice Upon A Time Antiques LLC, and Vermont Artisan Designs & Gallery.

Smoke-free zone signs and educating the community about the effects of secondhand smoke are just the beginning. As our community focuses on economic development, downtown revitalization and beautification, it is my hope that more businesses and residents will consider how secondhand smoke affects our community and show their support for smoke-free zones.

Brattleboro Area Prevention Coalition provides signage, resources and technical assistance to municipalities, businesses, event organizers and landlords seeking to create or promote a smoke-free zone in Brattleboro, Dummerston, Guilford, Putney and Vernon. Contact BAPC at 802-257-2175 or email Cassandra at SmokeFree802@gmail.com

Cassandra Holloway is the Policy and Project Coordinator for Brattleboro Area Prevention Coalition (BAPC), a local nonprofit that organizes community efforts to be involved in the ongoing prevention and reduction of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug abuse in the Windham Southeast area. Visit www.BrattleboroAreaPreventionCoalition.org or call 802.257.2175 to learn more about their prevention efforts and to get involved.