

Youth Count Column: June 2012: “Healthy Children: Smoking!”

On July 1, 2012, Indiana’s statewide ban on smoking in places of employment becomes effective. Many are adamantly opposed to bans that restrict smoking – period; others believe this ban, which includes a number of exemptions, is strong; still others believe it doesn’t go far enough. Regardless of your stance regarding smoking, you will probably agree that the passage of the ban has stirred up lots of conversation about smoking.

When I was growing up, my dad smoked 2-3 packs of filter less Lucky Strikes a day; he later switched to filtered Winston’s. One was probably better for him than the other. Whatever the brand I’m quite certain I breathed the same amount of second-hand smoke. Daddy gave up smoking – but not until I was well into my 30’s. I have other loved ones who smoke. I didn’t like the smoke around me as a kid; it was stinky and it made me cough. As a well-seasoned adult I still don’t like it for the same reasons.

Smoking around children goes beyond personal preferences; there are facts known now that weren’t recognized when I was a child.. Youth Count advocates for youth; I’m an advocate for youth so I want to ensure that as you read this column you are aware of some facts related to young people and smoking.

1. Approximately 90% of smokers began when they were under 19 years of age. Many of these smokers were exposed to smoke by their parents. If you don’t want your children to smoke, then don’t smoke around them because it sends them the message that smoking is okay.
2. Smoke makes kids sick: Exposure to secondhand smoke is linked to asthma in children, ear infections, and chronic respiratory problems. Exposure to secondhand smoke is so serious that it leads to 150,000 cases of bronchitis and pneumonia in the U.S. every year
3. Exposure to secondhand smoke is a serious threat for children and developing fetuses. It is a Class A carcinogen, like asbestos.
4. Pregnant women exposed to Secondhand Smoke through the mothers blood results in lifelong complications for the baby including poorer lung development, increased chance of asthma, lower bone density, and lower IQ.
5. Exposure to smoke can increase the chances of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) by 200%.

Each of us make decisions on all sorts of life habits Whether it’s about smoking or other life issues, please think about how your decisions and subsequent actions will affect our children and young people – positively or negatively. Their health and well-being, their future, should influence our decisions.

For information about how you can help our youth, email barbara@youthcount.com , phone 812-923-1160, or visit www.youthcount.com

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