exposure.

The Newsletter of the Tobacco Free Task Force in Washington County

Issue: Review Assessment & Strategic Plan, Part I, March 2006

Results Reviewed by Program Area

The March 24th meeting reviewed the assessment data for the following Tobacco Free Task Force Program Areas:

- **Knowledge in Action;** which facilitates the exchange of information between experts, advocates, and lawmakers.
- **Set Them Free;** which works with school-related audiences to implement tobacco-free programs.
- **Do Your Part;** which supports local law enforcement and the business community in prohibiting the sale of tobacco products to minors.

Strategic plans for each program area were also discussed.

Knowledge in Action

During the 2005-2006 Fiscal Year, Washington County Health Partners (WCHP) met with 6 of the 9 legislators whose districts cover Washington County.

From those meetings, it was learned that lawmakers want to know the following regarding Tobacco Control programs:

- Program results;
- How the lawmakers' constituents are being helped; and
- That the money is being spent wisely.

It was also learned that the legislators agree that tobacco use prevention programs for children, and tobacco use cessation programs for those who want to quit are important.

As part of the strategic plan, mapping software will be used for each legislative district to track results from Tobacco Quit Kits; Smoke-free Home and Vehicle Kits; New Baby Smoke-free Home and Vehicle kits; Smoking Prevention programs; and Cessation Program participants. These statistics will be used to update Lawmakers (and candidates) regularly.

The 2006 **Knowledge in Action** meeting will be held in December with the ensuing edition of *Exposure* mailed in January, just before the General Assembly begins budget appropriation hearings.

There will be more study to better understand the complicated state budget process.

Continued on page two.

Review Assessment & Strategic Plan I

March 24, 2006 Tobacco Free Task Force Meeting Issue:
The review of assessment data & the strategic plan looks at what has been learned during the current year to help shape the strategic plan for the upcoming fiscal year.

Meeting Highlights

- Washington County Tobacco Control Funds
- **Knowledge in Action** assessment results and strategic plan
- **Set Them Free** assessment results and strategic plan
- **Do Your Part** assessment results and strategic plan
- Legislative/Budget update

Next Tobacco Free Task Force Meeting...

Friday, April 28, 2006
9-11 a.m.
Presbyterian SeniorCare
Hillsview Chapel Meditation Area
Washington, PA

Next Issue:
Review Assessment Data & Strategic Plan II

Fast Facts

Rally at State Capitol to Save Tobacco Settlement
A rally was held at the State Capitol in Mid-March to urge legislators to save the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement (MSA) Funds for prevention and cessation programs.

Representatives from The American Lung Association, American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, and Pennsylvania Alliance to Control Tobacco (P.A.C.T.) organized the event.

According to Diane Phillips of the American Cancer Society, "Pennsylvania is reporting a strong economy with a surplus in tax revenue. There is no need to raid the Tobacco Settlement Fund to balance the budget. Misusing these dollars only serves to further jeopardize the health of Pennsylvanians who want to quit smoking and makes it harder to protect children from tobacco companies."

Martin Raniowski, with the American Heart Association, said, "Any funds diverted now will be paid later by taxpayers who face rising healthcare costs."

In a statement issued to the media, the group had hoped that Governor Rendell would have restored funding to the 12% level as allocated under Act 77.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that proper funding for should be at 16 percent of the MSA funds alloted to Pennsylvania.

Prevention and cessation programs have been a success in PA, as youth access to tobacco has been reduced by 20%, and adult smoking rates have dropped 3% since 2000.

Sources: www.lunginfo.org
www.cancer.org
www.heart.org

Review Assessment Data

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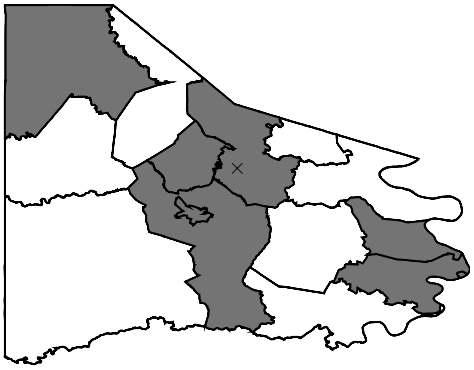
Successful program participants will be sought out for endorsements for the cessation and prevention programs. It was also suggested that lawmakers be sent postcard updates as well as including program statistics in future editions of *Exposure.*

Set Them Free



Washington County School Districts Fiscal Year 2005-2006. Shaded areas indicate districts with at least one funded program.

In reviewing assessment results in the 2002-2003 fiscal year, every school district in the county but one had at least one funded program.

For 2003-2004, Monongahela Valley Hospital did not have the staff to do school programs, and the popular Tar Wars program was unfunded by the Washington County Tobacco Free Program due to a controversy with the American Academy of Family Physicians.

As a result of these issues, fewer programs were held. However, evidence-based programs such as the Minnesota Prevention Program (MSPP), and Teens Against Tobacco Use (TATU) were still being held. Only six school districts in the county had no funded programs.

In 2004-2005, **Break Free**, a comprehensive pilot program, began in the Washington School District with the LikeSkills Program in Grades 3-8, the Not-On-Tobacco (NOT) program in Grades 10 & 12, and the "Why Animals Don't Smoke" Program in K-2. Smoke Detection Systems were installed in the high school restrooms with plans to do the same for the middle school as well. The **Break Free Program** resulted in getting a baseline for the Youth Tobacco Survey (YTS). There were still six school districts in the county with no funded programs.

In 2005-2006, budget cuts limited the funding resources for many school programs while the strike in the Washington School District disrupted efforts to continue the Break Free Program. Currently, seven school districts in the county have no funded programs.

The Strategic Plan for the **Set Them Free** program area, includes getting a school resource brochure into every school district in the county, which will highlight the MSPP and "Why Animals Don't Smoke" Programs. There are also plans to provide for flexibility in training school staff in TATU and NOT.

> *"We want to improve communication. The pilot program demonstrated how essential, yet difficult the communication process can be. In the future, our program will include a plan to reach out to the various audiences and decision-makers in school systems."*
>
> —Lee Rutledge-Falcione, WCHP Executive Director

Audiences that needs to be communicated with include:

- School boards;

Review Assessment Data, Set Them Free (cont.)

- Superintendents;
- Principals; and
- Teachers.

It was suggested that Shool Boards and Superintendents should be contacted in April/May 2006, while program providers would work one-on-one with principals and teachers in the Fall of 2006.

Plans include implementing the MSPP program for 4th, 5th or 6th grades in all 14 county school districts. Since MSPP is only a six-session program, according to Ms. Rutledge-Falcione, "It strikes a balance between length and being an evidence-based program."

Additional plans include holding the "Why Animals Don't Smoke Program" in Kindergarten and 1st Grades. "It went over really well in the Break Free Program," said Ms. Rutledge-Falcione. "Also, there are no evidence-based programs for that age group."

Another aspect of the strategic plan will be to gather data on tobacco usage by school district. While considerable data was gathered from the Break Free Program and a baseline was achieved for the Youth Tobacco Survey (YTS), the Fall 2005 strike in the Washington School District pushed gathering the second data point to the Spring of 2006.

Data that was gathered from the Break Free Program in the Washington School District showed that tobacco usage amongst middle and high school students were higher than the state average. Attempts to look at ways of other getting data will explored as well, such as the safe and drug-free schools program.

Do Your Part

Enforcement Compliance Check (ECC) compliance in Washington County remains above the 90% PA Department of Health Minimum.

With data in from 2 of the current fiscal year's 3 cycles of checks, the current rate of compliance is at 94.7% amongst Washington County Tobacco Retailers.

As part of the strategic plan to make available additional funds for expanded school programs, WCHP will complete all enforcement compliance checks for all three cycles in the new fiscal year.

Effective in July, local Police Departments, and District Judges will receive letters sharing results from Fiscal Year 2005-2006, thanking them for their help, and letting them know that all compliance checks will be done in-house because of budgetary matters. It is hope that they will understand the decision and that good relationships will be maintained.

Since its inception during the 2002-2003 fiscal year, ECC compliance rates have grown from 89.3%, and have stayed at or above 94%.

Fast Facts (continued.)

Pennsylvania to Tax Non-cigarette Tobacco Products?
State Representative Mauree Gingrich is seeking support amongst her House colleagues to institute a tax on non-cigarette tobacco products.

Currently, only Pennsylvania and the District of Columbia do not have at least some type of tax on non-cigarette products.

Representative Gingrich recently sent letters to encourage fellow House members to join her in co-sponsoring legislation to amend the Tax Reform Code of 1971.

Though a bill has not been introduced yet, the plan would not affect the current excise tax placed on cigarettes.

The plan would impose an excise tax of 20% on all non-cigarette tobacco products.

It is not yet known how much revenue the soon-to-be-proposed tax would generate.

Should you want to contact your legislator about the pending legislation, our website, www.tobaccofreewashington.org, includes a list of state representatives and their respective contact information the under the **Knowledge in Action** section.

Source: American Lung Association

(800) QUIT NOW
(800) 784-8669

Referral line to free tobacco cessation services

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Washington County Health Partners
Washington Federal Square Building
190 North Main Street, Suite 208
Washington, PA 15301

www.tobaccofreewashington.org

Review Assessment Data & Strategic Plan

March 24th Meeting Notes Inside...

Note: You are invited to the next Tobacco Free Task Force Meeting. Details are on the flipside. Please let us know if you are going to attend.

Next Tobacco Free Task Force Meeting Issue:

Review Assessment Data & Strategic Plan

Friday, April 28, 2006, 9-11 a.m.
Hillsview Chapel Meditation Area, Presbyterian SeniorCare, Washington, PA

We will continue our review of assessment data and move towards the development of a strategic plan for the upcoming fiscal year.

All members of the Tobacco Free Task Force and the WCHP Board of Directors are invited to attend. In addition, this meeting will be of special interest to community health advocates, and citizens interested in tobacco free programs for children and adults. Please feel free to invite others to attend who have an interest in this issue.

To ensure enough materials are available for all attendees, please RSVP by contacting:
Craig Whyel, Tobacco Free Outreach Specialist
Phone: 724-222-6511, ext.12 or 1-866-904-3733 (FREE) ● E-mail: crw@wchpinc.org.

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