exposure.

The Newsletter of the Tobacco Free Task Force in Washington County

Issue: Knowledge in Action, 2006

Sustaining Tobacco Control Programs Through Advocacy

25% of Pennsylvania's Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement (MSA) Funds have been cut for the current fiscal year.

The cuts have been felt locally, with $144,019 not coming in to Washington County for Tobacco Use Prevention and Cessation Programs.

The amount for the upcoming fiscal year is in question until legislators pass a budget, which is due by June 30, 2006.

With such programs across the commonwealth facing an uncertain future, Tobacco Free Advocates have been meeting with their legislators to educate them about the importance of Tobacco Free Programs.

They have also stressed the need for MSA funds to be used for its intend ed purpose--stopping the cycle of death and addiction caused by tobacco through well-funded and sustained programs.

"It took decades to get to this level of disease and death. We will need decades to reverse it," said Lee Rutledge-Falcione, WCHP Executive Director. "It is also difficult to make lasting impacts when the program is only at 50% of the Centers for Disease Control's Recommended Minimum Funding Level."

At the **Knowledge in Action** meeting on January 27, 2006, advocates, experts, and legislators met to address the issue of how to communicate effetively with legislators.

Washington County Presenters

The Honorable J. Barry Stout, PA Senator District 46
The senator has more than 35 years of legislative experience and recommends Tobacco Free advocates develop personal relationships with their legislators.

"You have to be the best advocates for what you do," Stout said.

Senator Stout also pointed out the importance of lawmakers knowing how programs affect constituents; that program results are good, and that the funding is spent wisely.

Continued on Page Two.

KnowledgeinAction

January 27, 2006 Tobacco Free Task Force Meeting
Issue: Knowledge In Action
The goal of **Knowledge In Action** is to facilitate the exchange of information between experts, advocates, and lawmakers.

Meeting Highlights
- The need for advocacy
- Why a comprehensive tobacco control program is important
- Advocacy versus lobbying

Guest Speakers
- J. Barry Stout, PA Senator District 46
- Will Thomeier, Field Representative for John Pippy, PA Senator District 37
- William Cousins, Washington County Tobacco Free Task Force
- Rachel Blair, PA Alliance to Control Tobacco (PACT)

Next Tobacco Free Task Force Meeting...
Friday, February 24, 2006
9-11 a.m.
Presbyterian SeniorCare
Hillsview Chapel Meditation Area
Washington, PA

Next Issue:
Ask and Advise

Fast Facts

Researchers Find Racial Differences in Smoking-Related Risks of Lung Cancer

Blacks who smoke up to a pack of cigarettes a day are far more likely than whites to develop lung cancer, according to a study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine.*

It also found that Asians and Hispanics were less likely than black smokers to develop the disease.

The racial differences disappeared amongst those who smoked more than a pack a day.

The study also reports doctors have long known that blacks have a much greater chance of getting lung cancer than whites and are more likely to die from it. The reasons for the disparity are unclear.

According to the American Lung Association, black men are 50% more likely to develop lung cancer and 36% more likely to die from the disease than white men.

In an accompanying editorial with the study, geneticist Neil Risch of the University of California, San Francisco noted that previous research has suggested that black smokers tend to absorb more nicotine and tobacco carcinogens than whites.

Some researchers contend that genetics play a role while others attribute the difference to smoking habits.

Source: Associated Press

(800) QUIT NOW

(800) 784-8669

Referral line to free tobacco cessation services

KnowledgeinAction

Continued from Page One

The Senator also added that it is important to let legislators know how their districts are being served by the program.

Senator Stout further said that the Fall 2005 $10 million dollar Tobacco Use Prevention and Cessation cuts was due to a $400 million dollar cutback from the Federal Government to the state Medicaid program.

"The (upcoming) budget process is an annual ritualistic dance," said Senator Stout who serves on the Appropriation Committee. Public hearings begin the second week of February, which last 4-6 weeks. All of the state agencies bring forth their budget proposals. The process enables members of the General Assembly to talk with the heads of each agency to find out how the monies they receive is being utilized, and what they need in the future to continue serving Pennsylvanians.

"We knew the tobacco cessation programs were at 12% (of the MSA funds). We didn't understand what the reduction to 9% meant," said Sharon Russell, District Administrator for Senator Stout. In working with Washington County Health Partners, the Senator's office was sent additional information regarding the Tobacco Use Prevention cuts. "We didn't realize that it meant $289,000 (over 2 years) would not being coming into Washington County for the program, and that's information we need to know."

Will Thomeier, Field Representative for John Pippy, PA Senator, District 37

Thomeier agreed strongly with Senator Stout's comments. He said further that it is important to make legislators aware of how tobacco control efforts impact constituents. "They want to know who in their district is affected by these programs, how the money is being spent, and that people are being helped."

"Senator Pippy believes the monies (MSA Funds) should stay in health care. He doesn't want to see it diverted to other areas."

** Editorial Note: Senators Pippy and Stout, as well as Representatives Lescovitz, Levdansky, and Maher have all met with WCHP staff regarding the Tobacco Free Program in Washington County. As of the second week of February, Senator Kasunic, Representatives Deweese, Daley, and Solobay have not scheduled meetings despite their serving part or all of Washington County in their respective districts. Our attempts to secure appointments with them have been ongoing for more than seven weeks.*

William Cousins, Monessen Tobacco Coalition & Washington County Tobacco Free Task Force Member

William Cousins' son Paul was 29 years old when he died in early 2004 following a lengthy battle from cancer that his doctors attributed to tobacco use.

William Cousins gave a presentation at the **Knowledge in Action** meeting that he has been giving at area schools since Paul's death. The presentation included photos of his son's hospital stays, showing the many surgeries he had to endure.

Paul Cousins lost part of his jaw, tongue, and the soft palate of his mouth. He also had a muscle on the right side of his chest removed to rebuild his damaged jaw. He had been on a feeding tube and a ventilator.

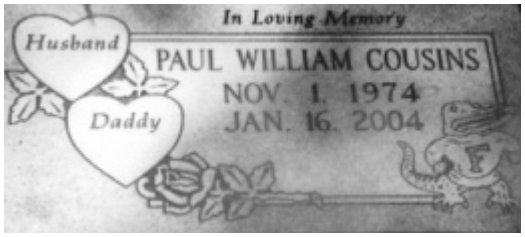
Knowledge In Action (cont.)

"We were stumped as why he started using tobacco. He had a grandmother who smoked but no one in our home used any tobacco products." William Cousins believes his son started smoking and using smokeless tobacco around the age of 13-14. "I figure it was peer pressure. He didn't want to be an outcast. He wanted to fit in."

Paul Cousins grew up in Washington County and attended the Ringgold School District, before any comprehensive tobacco control programs were available. By the time he was a young adult, and had moved to Florida to find work, he had already been addicted to tobacco.

Cousins pointed out that the pictures used in the presentation were his son's idea. He wanted people to see the devastation tobacco use causes. "It's going to get you. If it doesn't cause cancer, it will get you some other way...it will damage your heart...it will ruin your health."

In addition to his family in Pennsylvania, Paul Cousins left behind a young wife and daughter. His daughter will be four years old this year.



Above: Paul Cousin's headstone

Rachel Blair, PA Alliance to Control Tobacco (PACT)
"As a representative of an organization that's involved with grassroots movements, advocacy is a crucial tool," Blair said.

PACT's mission is to strengthen Tobacco Control Laws in Pennsylvania, provide education about the dangers of tobacco, and reduce statewide tobacco use through grassroots advocacy.

While advocacy involves the pursuit of influencing outcomes that directly affect people's lives, lobbying requires making a call to action so as to influence specific legislation.

"You cannot lobby using government funds which, in our case, is Master Settlement Funds (MSA)," Blair said.

Members of an organization can, on their own time as private citizens, lobby.

Members of a local coalition, for example, working without MSA funds, can lobby.

One of the most important aspects of advocacy is education. It is imperative to keep the public and public officials aware of the work being done and update them when necessary.

For more information on PACT, visit their website at: www.pactonline.org.

Fast Facts (continued.)

New Study Links Smoking, Deformity
A study published in the January issue of *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery*, shows that pregnant women who smoke increase the risk of their babies being born with digital deformities such as missing fingers or toes.

The study found that pregnant women who smoked up to 10 cigarettes a day had a 29% chance of giving birth to a child with a digital deformity.

That amount increased to 78% for pregnant women who smoked over 20 cigarettes a day.
Source: The Daily Pennsylvanian

California Labels Secondhand Smoke as Toxic
California has become the first state to declare secondhand smoke a toxic air pollutant.

This means that tobacco fumes are considered to be in the same category as diesel exhaust, arsenic, and benzene.

The action was based on a report that found a sharply increased risk of breast caner in young women exposed to secondhand smoke.

Secondhand smoke is already linked to premature births, SIDS, low-birth weight babies, asthma and heart disease as well as other cancers and numerous health problems in children.

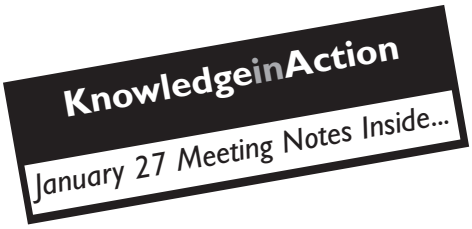
Since 1993, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has classified secondhand smoke as a Group A carcinogen, comparable to the most toxic cancer causing agents, but the California Environmental Protection Agency Air Resources Board is the first to take action.

Now that it has identified secondhand smoke in this way, it must evaluate the need for action to reduce exposures.
Source: Associated Press

NONPROFIT ORG.
US POSTAGE
PAID
WASHINGTON PA
PERMIT NO 93

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

www.tobaccofreewashington.org



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:

AskandAdvise

Friday, February 24, 2006, 9-11 a.m.
Hillsview Chapel Meditation Area, Presbyterian SeniorCare, Washington, PA

Collaborates with health care professionals to implement a system to identify and help tobacco users to quit. Scheduled speakers include:

- Rita Donatelli & Kathy Higgins, The Washington Hospital
- Anita Leonard, Monongahela Valley Hospital
- Rita Simko Stotka, Centerville Clinics
- Kim Soles, Clean Air For Healthy Children
- A dental health professional (to be announced)

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 health care professionals, community health advocates, and medical administrators. 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.