

Oregonians speak out – a series of conversations about creating a healthy environment for everyone in our community.



tobacco's true cost on good health



Paying the price

Tobacco use is perhaps the single most significant preventable health problem in the world. The costs to our communities are staggering. Hundreds of thousands of lives lost. Money spent to treat smoking-related diseases. Lost worker productivity. And damage from cigarette-induced fires every year in Oregon.

Taxing an addictive and harmful product to discourage its use is a worthwhile idea. With every increase in tobacco taxes, usage has declined. Tax revenue can be directed toward health care for lung disease and cancer. And, more importantly, the revenue can fund programs to stop young people from taking up the habit in the first place.

— Mel Cheney

*Executive Director, Community Cancer Foundation/
Community Cancer Center, Roseburg*



Breaking the cycle

Tobacco is often a person's first entry into a long-term life of addiction. And more often than not, it becomes an intergenerational problem. Mothers and fathers smoke – and their kids

do, too. This unhealthy trend will continue, unless families understand all the risks of smoking.

Community leaders need to realize that the health costs of smoking – heart and lung disease, emphysema, cancer, and more – also take a toll financially. But by focusing on prevention and early intervention, we can stop the cycle of addiction and help people experience the joy of feeling healthy.

— Sue Densmore

Member, Oregon Environmental Council, Medford



Changing the future

Role models play a big part in the behavior of young people. When someone you look up to is using tobacco, chances are you will too.

In 2005, I helped pass an ordinance in Pendleton that prohibited free public tobacco sampling. For our community, it was an important step in curbing tobacco use, which can eventually reduce health care costs. It stopped sampling at our local rodeo, where kids had easy access to the same chewing tobacco being used by their role models – rodeo cowboys. The cowboys said they started chewing as kids. And I want to stop this from happening to our kids in Pendleton.

— Phillip Houk

Mayor, Pendleton

“The effects of tobacco are felt throughout Oregon, particularly among the economically disadvantaged and our youth. That’s why reducing tobacco use is an issue of social justice, as well as community health.”

— Reverend W.J. Mark Knutson, Pastor, Augustana Lutheran Church and Northwest Health Foundation Board Member



join the conversation



Community Health Priorities
A NORTHWEST HEALTH FOUNDATION PROJECT

www.CommunityHealthPriorities.org

In Partnership with the
Oregon Department of Human Services