

# Tobacco Free Parks and Playgrounds

## Capital District Residents Support Tobacco-Free Parks and Playgrounds

According to the 2011 Community Tobacco Survey conducted by Siena Research Institute of residents living in Albany, Rensselaer and Schenectady counties:

**83%** of Capital District residents favor smoke-free playgrounds—including 2 out of every 3 current smokers.

**77%** of Capital District residents favor smoke-free municipal pools—including 60% of current smokers.

**73%** of Capital District residents favor smoke-free building entryways.

**62%** of Capital District residents favor smoke-free beaches.

**59%** of Capital District residents favor smoke-free parks.

**82.5%** of adults in the Capital District do not smoke. (NYS Department of Health, 2008-2009)

**85%** of Capital District residents do not allow smoking in their home.

**81%** of Capital District residents do not allow smoking in their car.

[2011 Community Tobacco Survey report available at : [http://www.smokefreecapital.org/pdf/CDTFCSmokingSurveyReport\\_July11.pdf](http://www.smokefreecapital.org/pdf/CDTFCSmokingSurveyReport_July11.pdf)]

## Why Should Parks and Playgrounds be Tobacco-Free?

### Secondhand smoke: There is no safe level of exposure

- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has classified secondhand smoke, as a class A carcinogen – a substance known to cause cancer in humans. Secondhand smoke contains over 4,000 chemicals; 2,000 are poisons and 67 are cancer-causing agents. The 2006 Surgeon General's report concludes there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke.
- Secondhand smoke is responsible for over 50,000 deaths among nonsmokers each year.
- Children exposed to secondhand smoke are more likely to suffer from ear infections and reduced lung function.
- Secondhand smoke is especially harmful for children and adults with asthma and other chronic conditions. The EPA estimates that between 200,000 and one million asthmatic children have their condition worsened by secondhand smoke.

### Secondhand smoke is harmful in outdoor settings.

- Secondhand smoke levels in outdoor public places can reach levels as high as those found in indoor facilities where smoking is permitted.

### Cigarette litter is hazardous

- Cigarette butts are the most littered item in the world. They are highly toxic and dangerous to children and animals. Small children are at risk of swallowing, choking or burning themselves with discarded butts and suffering nicotine poisoning.



## Children model adult behavior

- When children see adults smoking in family-friendly places such as parks and playgrounds, they see the behavior as acceptable. Smoking where children play is sending the wrong message to our children.
- Every year in New York, nearly 36,000 children begin smoking. Everyday an estimated 3,900 young people under the age of 19 try their first cigarette and one-third of these children will die prematurely from tobacco related illness.
- Parks are about enjoying clean air, natural beauty and healthy activities. Cigarette butts make parks and playgrounds look dirty and cause lasting damage, while secondhand smoke can cause cancer, asthma and other health problems. Smoking just does not fit in.

**There is no law that guarantees a person's "right" to smoke in parks and playgrounds.** Albany county residents have a right to protect our children, our community, our environment and our health.

"Failure to ban smoking in outdoor public venues may expose non-smokers to levels of environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) as high or higher than received in indoor spaces where smoking is unrestricted."

*- James Repace, "Banning Outdoor Smoking is Scientifically Justifiable", Tobacco Control Digest, March 2000*

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"A no smoking policy in the parks makes good healthy sense. It is a place for kids to work on healthy recreational habits like swimming, playing, and getting good exercise."

*- Tom Ciancetta, former Executive Director of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Schenectady which operates Quackenbush Park as a no-smoking park*

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"As a parent, a nurse, an athlete and a frequent user of the beautiful Capital District parks, I am very much in favor of cigarette smoking being prohibited in these areas. The parks were designed with thoughts of healthy activities – running, bicycling, children playing and uniting the community. Allowing smoking is a bad example for our children. It is unsightly and contributes to the growing problem of litter. And quite frankly, it smells. As an ex-smoker, I understand the challenges of being a smoker, but our kids shouldn't have to suffer by breathing in other people's secondhand smoke. Years from now, I think we will all agree that smoking never belonged in parks."



*-Kathleen Garvey, Capital District resident and mother of 4*