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October 2, 2008

Strong Public Support to Reduce Tobacco Advertising in Stores

Price Chopper Super Markets Responds

A survey of residents in the greater capital region this summer revealed strong public support for the elimination of tobacco advertising in grocery stores with 68% of adults stating that grocery stores should eliminate tobacco advertising. Even stronger support was found for not posting tobacco advertising in pharmacies with 73% of respondents in agreement.

The data also showed that 65% of those surveyed believed that pharmacies should not even be selling tobacco products; nearly 50% also felt that grocery stores should not be selling tobacco products either.

The survey was conducted this summer by Syracuse University researchers, who completed 1500 telephone interviews with adults in Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Warren, and Washington counties. The research was commissioned by the Capital Region Community Partnerships.

Despite this public support for the elimination of tobacco advertising in groceries and pharmacies, extensive advertising exists at many of these stores. Across New York State, large grocery stores have on average, 19 tobacco ads posted, and pharmacies promoting tobacco with 18 ads on average.

For several years the New York State Department of Health has been funding community based partnerships to educate the public about tobacco advertising in retail stores and its role in increasing the likelihood of youth smoking. Judy Rightmyer, Program Director for the Capital District Tobacco-Free Coalition said, "We are seeing strong support from the community to stop the advertising of tobacco in stores where families with young children shop." Rightmyer explained, "Children and teens are especially vulnerable to tobacco advertising and promotion. There are now numerous studies available that show that tobacco advertising and promotion increase tobacco use among adolescents."

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In addition to educating the public about the issue, the community partnerships have been meeting with executives at the Golub Corporation to discuss voluntary actions they might take to reduce the likelihood of children seeing tobacco ads and products at their stores. Over the summer Price Chopper redesigned the display cases that are prominently featured at the front of many of their stores. Those cases are now fogged over making the tobacco products and advertisements minimally visible. In addition the tobacco industry signage that was often featured at the top of the displays or along side the displays have been replaced with simple black and white signs stating Cigarette Center. Colorful, tobacco industry price lists have been replaced with black and white price listings. Tobacco displays behind the customer service desk have been entirely covered with curtains. Price Chopper will complete the renovation of tobacco displays at all its stores in the coming months.

Laura Waterhouse, Albany County Reality Check Coordinator was happy to see these changes, "Price Chopper has taken a very positive step in regards to decreasing tobacco use. By eliminating the advertising and promotion of tobacco products in all of their stores, they are showing their support for the health and well-being of the families and the youth in our communities."

Reality Check, a youth-led anti-tobacco action project, is part of a comprehensive tobacco control program developed by the New York State Department of Health. Reality Check works with teens in the fight against the tobacco industry. Currently, all partners of the Tobacco Control Program are implementing activities throughout the communities of New York State that address the advertising, promotion and sponsorship activities of tobacco companies.

The Capital District Tobacco-Free Coalition is one of 30 community partnerships funded by the New York State Department of Health Tobacco Control Program. For more information about the Coalition and its projects, visit www.smokefreecapital.org.

For further information about the survey, contact Dr. Jeff Stonecash at Syracuse University, (315)443-3629 or Judy Rightmyer, Capital District Tobacco-Free Coalition, (518) 233-1106.

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