

NEWS RELEASE

January 13, 2006

MASON COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

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SHELTON, WA 98584

(360) 427-9670 EXT. 260

TO: KMAS, Shelton-Mason County Journal, The Kitsap Sun, The Olympian, The Tacoma News Tribune, The Seattle Times, The Seattle PI, The SCOPE & What's Happening Newsletters

RE: Mason County Tobacco-Free Policies

On January 12, 2006, Mason County Commissioners set the standard for public health leadership in Washington State by adopting a model policy to protect the health of Mason County citizens. In their role as the Board of Health, the Commissioners adopted three tobacco-free policies as part of a comprehensive strategy to reduce high smoking rates in Mason County.

While state and national smoking rates have decreased in the past few years, Mason County smoking rates have not followed the same trend. An estimated 28% of the adult population smokes in Mason County, compared to 19.5% for the State. Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of death in the United States, causing an estimated 440,000 deaths each year according to The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Adopting these tobacco-free policies will create an environment that supports current tobacco users efforts to quit and discourages potential users, particularly youth, from initiating tobacco use. The following county policies have been adopted:

- Effective immediately, smoking is prohibited in county parks and on county fairground property.
- In addition, on May 15, 2006, smoking will be prohibited on or in all other county owned, leased, or operated property, buildings, and vehicles. The current county policy prohibits smoking in buildings and vehicles.
- Effective immediately, tobacco sales, sampling, advertising, and sponsorship are prohibited on county owned or leased property or during county-sponsored events.

In following Governor Gregoire's challenge of making Washington the #1 Healthiest State in the Nation, Commissioners Kamin and Ring Erickson agreed that we should extend this challenge to Mason County and try to become the **Healthiest County in the State**. Commissioner Kamin stated "It is important for us to set a good example for our kids" regarding smoking in family-friendly community venues.

Mason County personnel will post signs and educate the community about the new tobacco policies and provide cessation resource information to those who choose to quit using tobacco. The Tobacco Quit Line offers free one-on-one counseling for people who want to quit. To contact the Quit Line call 1-877-270-STOP or log on to www.quitline.com. For further information, call Steve Kutz at (360) 427-9670 ext. 260.