

NEWS RELEASE

August 24, 2010

MASON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

**411 NORTH 5TH ST
SHELTON, WA 98584**

TO: KMAS, KRXY, SHELTON-MASON COUNTY JOURNAL, THE OLYMPIAN, SHELTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, NORTH MASON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, CITY OF SHELTON, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL, THE SUN

RE: Tobacco Compliance Checks

93% of Mason County retailers say NO to tobacco for minors

June, 2010 --- During the past decade, Mason County Public Health's Tobacco Prevention and Control team has worked with the Washington State Liquor Control Board and youth volunteers to check retail stores for compliance with state laws prohibiting the sale of tobacco products to minors. The teens participate with their parents' consent. The joint venture includes a strong educational component and technical assistance to store owners and their clerks to ensure their understanding of the law. Tobacco retailers must post bright yellow warning signs at all points of sale.

Clerks who sell tobacco to minors can be fined \$50 for a first offense. The business owner is fined \$100 for a first sale to a minor, \$300 for a second one, and \$1000 for a third violation, plus a six-month suspension of the store's tobacco license. A fourth illegal sale within two years will cost the retailer \$1500 and a one-year license suspension. Further violations result in the permanent cancellation of the store's tobacco license.

Random checks of 29 retail stores in Mason County show that 93 percent refused to sell tobacco products to minors, up from 81% in 09 according to local public health officials. 95 percent in 2008 was the record high for retailers correctly refusing to sell tobacco to minors in Mason County.

Retailers who sold to minors were Rite Aid Belfair and Elena's Tienda in Shelton.

Community businesses are doing the right (and legal) thing when they refuse to sell tobacco products to minors," said Vicki Kirkpatrick, Director of Mason County Public Health. "Addiction to tobacco products often starts during adolescence. People pay a steep price for this addiction, with long-term illnesses and shortened lives," she said. "If we want healthier communities, we must keep young people from getting hooked on nicotine."

Tobacco use remains the leading cause of preventable death in the nation and in Mason County. Youth smoking rates in Mason County remain higher than the State average

2009 Adult Smoking Rates DOWN

New survey results show Washington's adult smoking rate has dropped to a new low of 14.8 percent—down from 15.3 percent the previous year.

Washington now has the third lowest smoking rate in the nation—the state's best ranking since measuring across all 50 states started in 1995.

This translates to 320,000 fewer people smoking in the state and about 105,000 people who will be spared an early, tobacco-related death.

Local Public Health Departments have contributed to declining smoking rates through efforts to prevent youth from initiating tobacco use, promote cessation resources for people trying to quit, and counter tobacco industry marketing.

In 2007-2009, Mason County adult smoking rates at 23.2% (+/-4.2). Although, the 2009 rate was at a record low of 18.9% (+/-5.9)

12.2% of Mason County adults report exposure to second hand smoke in their home.

2008 Youth Cigarette Smoking

6th grade: 2.8% in Mason County, and 1.4% statewide, reported they currently smoke cigarettes.

10th grade: 22.3% in Mason County, and 14.4% statewide, reported they currently smoke cigarettes.

Data for Mason County were collected from youth who participated in the Washington State Healthy Youth Survey (HYS) in Fall 2008.

For more information about the Tobacco Prevention and Control Program or to report tobacco sale violations, call 360-427-9670 ext. 545 or visit <http://www.co.mason.wa.us/> Mason County residents, who are ready to quit smoking or chewing tobacco, can get FREE support and medication by calling the Washington Tobacco Quit Line at 1-877-270-7867.

Ross Gallagher
Chair

Lynda Ring Erickson
Commissioner

Tim Sheldon
Commissioner