

Tobacco Tax – A Winning Solution

Kristie Wolff – Program Manager - American Lung Association in ND

On February 3, 2016, the American Lung Association released its 14th annual State of Tobacco Control Report. This report tracks progress on key, proven effective tobacco control policies at the federal and state level. Grades are assigned in a variety of areas - including strength of smoke-free laws, access to cessation services, support for comprehensive tobacco-prevention programs, and level of tobacco taxes - based on whether these policies are adequately protecting citizens from tobacco-related death and disease.

Amidst otherwise good "grades", North Dakota received an "F" for its current tobacco tax rates. At only 44 cents per pack, North Dakota's cigarette tax is among the lowest in the nation, a tax rate that has remained since its last increase in 1993.

Why Support Higher Tobacco Taxes?

Tobacco tax increases are one of the most effective ways to reduce smoking and other tobacco use, especially among kids.

When tobacco prices increase:

- Fewer people use tobacco
- People who continue to use tobacco consume less
- People who have already quit are less likely to start again
- Young people are less likely to ever start using tobacco

Tobacco taxes are widely accepted by the public and even supported by many tobacco users. Statewide public polling consistently shows this to be true here in North Dakota. Residents across all demographics - age, gender, political affiliation, and geography - overwhelming support tobacco prevention efforts, including those to increase tobacco taxes.

What's the Cost of Tobacco in ND?

While the average retail price in the U.S. of a pack of cigarettes is \$5.96 per pack, smoking-caused health care costs and productivity losses associated with just one pack of cigarettes is estimated to be a minimum of \$19.16 per pack. That cost difference is often covered by non-tobacco using taxpayers. Higher tobacco taxes save money by reducing tobacco-related health care costs, including Medicaid expenses, over the long-term.

The true costs of tobacco use, however, reaches far beyond the monetary costs. Smoking continues to kill more people than alcohol, AIDS, car crashes, illegal drugs, murders, and suicides combined, and thousands more die from other tobacco-related causes, such as fires caused by smoking (more than 1,000 deaths/year nationwide).

Having one of the lowest tobacco taxes in the nation is an award worth having. Our state can achieve significant health and revenue gains by increasing tobacco taxes on cigarettes and other tobacco products like smokeless tobacco and cigars. It is time to raise the tobacco tax for the health of our citizens and to effectively protect our youth from a lifelong addiction to nicotine and the deadly consequences of tobacco. Please talk to your local, state, and federal officials about the impacts of low tobacco taxes and what they *can* and *will* do to move North Dakota's "F" grade to an "A".

Volunteering: What it means for you and your community



Can you take a guess at the percentage of volunteering rates in the United States? The latest release from The Bureau of Labor Statistics was 25.3 percent, the lowest rate since the first survey was administered in 2002. This is an alarming number due to the fact that many mission-driven organizations rely on and are successful, only if they maintain a strong volunteer workforce. These organizations are often filling in the gaps to help meet the needs of the people in our society, so volunteering is something that needs to be looked at seriously. There are numerous reasons why the returns of volunteering far outweigh the time or money you invest. Listed below are five reasons you should consider making volunteering a part of your every day life.

1. Volunteers live longer and are healthier.
2. Volunteering establishes strong relationships.
3. Volunteering is good for your career.
4. Volunteering is good for society.
5. Volunteering gives you a sense of purpose.

It is important to take the time to identify what drives and inspires volunteers; what made them become volunteers in the first place. Many volunteers donate their time to add meaning to their lives. Most believe that the meaning of life has something to do with helping people. Volunteering can help people achieve this meaning. Being able to adequately communicate to your volunteers the meaning and value of their contribution can go a long way in developing successful volunteers. Here are five ways to communicate that message to your volunteers:

1. Keep volunteers informed.
2. Keep it real.
3. Encourage involvement of volunteers in planning.
4. Recognize truly selfless acts.
5. Enable a path for volunteers to thrive in their role.

It is important to let the volunteers know they are making a difference and their time, money, and support mean the world to the future of the organization.

Are you looking for volunteer opportunities in Pembina County? Take a look at the list below and feel free to call each organization to get more information.

- Faith in Action: (701) 265-6230
- Foster Grandparent Program: (701) 795-3112
- NDSU Extension of Pembina County: (701) 265-8411
- Pembina County Emergency Food Pantry: (701) 265-4244
- Pembina County Health and Wellness: (701) 265-2465
- Pembina County Meals and Transportation: (701) 454-6586
- Presbyterian Thrift Shop: (701) 265-3776
- Retired Senior Volunteer Program: (701) 787-0043

Source: blogs.volunteermatch.org

Join the *Choose Health! Tobacco Coalition* today!

Are you passionate about decreasing the use of tobacco in Pembina County? Are you an individual that is looking to help lead and use your voice to pass tobacco-free policies? If you answered yes to any of the above questions, please consider joining the *Choose Health! Tobacco Coalition*. We are looking for bright, new faces to help us tackle the tobacco companies' tactics and to make Pembina County a healthier place to live, work and play. The coalition meets twice a year to discuss emerging issues and hot topics. The tobacco prevention team looks forward to hearing from you soon! If you are interested in joining, please call Pembina County Public Health at 701-265-4248. Make a difference today!



Pembina County Public Health Celebrates Child Passenger Safety!

This February, our office spent time educating all of the K-2nd grade students throughout the county. In North Dakota, car crashes are one of the leading causes of injury to our children. This is why the state and local departments of health put energy into spreading the word. This year, our message was spread to over 545 Pembina County students!

Rachel Ramsay, RN and Kallie Christenson, RN took time to develop a presentation based on the materials provided by the state health department. The students watched a movie about using booster seats and always buckling up in the back seat. They read a book and got to meet the “Buckle-up Bear”. They also signed pledges to always remember to buckle up in the back. The pledges will be entered into a state-wide drawing to win a giant teddy bear! Educational materials were sent home with each child, as well as information on the car seat program offered to qualifying children throughout the county.



Pembina County Public Health has also been working on a display for the public when they visit the courthouse. It focuses on winter coats and car seat safety; highlighting tips on how to use coats and blankets safely with car seats. Using snowsuits and bulky jackets with children causes the harness straps to not be tight enough. So, be sure to strap your child in their seat first and wrap them in coats and blankets afterwards. Below, Kristi Ricard, administrative assistant, and Kallie Christenson, RN stand next to the newest display!

If you or someone you know needs a car seat or would like a check-up on their seat, simply give us a call at 265-4248.



Pembina County Public Health



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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REMINDER: Pembina County Tobacco Coalition will meet March 2 in Drayton. Call Public Health for details!

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We're on the Web!

pembinacountynd.gov/publichealth

If you would like to receive this newsletter or join the tobacco coalition, please contact us by phone or email.

Pembina County Resource Spotlight

Health Tracks

“Healthy Children Right From the Start”

*** What is it?**

Health Tracks is a FREE program for children 0-21 years on North Dakota Medical Assistance. It is a preventive health check-up to discuss health concerns and available community resources. All families enrolled in ND Medical Assistance are **strongly encouraged** to participate in a Health Tracks screening at least annually.

*** What does the check up entail?**

The screening is completed by a Registered Nurse and consists of a variety of components including resource and referral information.

- ♥ Hearing and Vision Evaluations
- ♥ Dental Evaluations
- ♥ Physical Assessment
- ♥ Lab Tests
- ♥ Developmental Screening
- ♥ Mental and Behavior Health Screenings
- ♥ Education
- ♥ Parental Guidance
- ♥ Connection to community resources and referrals

* For more information contact Pembina County Public Health at 701-265-4248