

From:  
Sent: Monday, March 17, 2014 12:45 PM  
To: Sen. Peter Micciche  
Subject: Protecting the remaining 50%

March 17, 2104

Dear Senator Micciche -

For the past nine years, I have had the opportunity to work in my community assisting tobacco users to quit, encouraging our youth to never start using tobacco and working with businesses to establish healthy, smokefree environments for their employees and patrons. After watching my own mother-in-law die of lung cancer from a 50 year smoking habit, what I do every day is not so much a job as it is a deep desire to encourage every individual in my community to make choices to enhance their health and well-being. I would guess that there are very few individuals, if any, that don't know someone who has been impacted by tobacco use and/or secondhand smoke.

Given what we know about the sickness and death associated with exposure to the toxins in secondhand smoke, I have spent a good share of my nine years working with businesses and organizations all across the Kenai Peninsula helping them to establish comprehensive smokefree workplace and campus policies. Without exception, every business or agency that I have worked with that has enacted policy has been happily surprised by the overall positive response from the employees and the public. One lounge that we worked with was very concerned about the potential negative impact on their revenues, but decided to go forward with a smokefree policy because they felt it was the right thing to do for the health of their employees and patrons. When I visited their remodeled, smokefree lounge several months later, I spoke with a server that was thrilled that she didn't have to go home smelling of smoke each night. The owner shared with me that her revenues had actually increased since going smokefree. Many folks who would not visit before because of the smoky atmosphere were coming in to check it out. I am one of those people!

When I began this journey in 2005, I worked in a strip mall with shared walls. The business next door allowed (and still allows) indoor smoking. By 2:00pm each afternoon, the smoke became so noxious that we often had to leave the office early because our eyes and throats were burning. The landlord tried different methods to modify the ventilation system, but nothing worked. Finally, in 2012, we were forced to find another rental space that had a smokefree workplace policy. Had the adjacent business simply required that their employees and patrons smoke outside and away from the door, we would still be in that office space. All workers deserve the right to a safe, healthy work environment. It would be great if businesses all voluntarily had smokefree policies, but they don't. My community is included in the 50% of Alaskans who do not enjoy this protection.

Thank you for all that you have done to promote healthy communities. I know that long after my current job ends, I will be doing everything that I can to ensure that my children, grandchildren and all future generations of Alaskans enjoy healthy, smokefree spaces.

Respectfully,

Jenny Olendorff, Program Coordinator

Peninsula Smokefree Partnership