



# Smoke-Free News

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 2

APRIL 16, 2008

## Don't let your guard down!

Thanks to everyone who responded to our e-mail alert about the "smoking shack" amendment. There could be more amendments like this added on to other bills between now and the end of the Session on May 19<sup>th</sup>. We can't take smoke-free air for granted!

### Red Wing Meeting

**Next Meeting:**

**May 7, 2008**

**Noon to 1:00 pm**

*(Lunch is provided. Please RSVP to Tom Wolff.)*

**Fairview Red Wing Professional & Community Center**  
1407 West 4th Street, Red Wing

### Kenyon Meeting

**Next Meeting:**

**May 8, 2008**

**7:00 to 8:00 pm**

**Location TBA**

*(Check the Web site or call Tom Wolff for details.)*

**Coffee and dessert provided.**

### Cannon Falls Meeting

**Next Meeting:**

**May 15, 2008**

**7:00 to 8:00 pm**

**Location TBA**

*(Check the Web site or call Tom Wolff for details.)*

**Coffee and dessert provided.**

## "Smoking shack" amendment is a big step backward

During a marathon session that began April 3<sup>rd</sup> and ended in the early morning of April 4<sup>th</sup>, the Minnesota House passed an amendment to the budget-balancing bill intended to bring indoor smoking back to bars and restaurants. The amendment would permit the construction of smoking shelters outside of businesses. The sponsors described these shelters as "smoking shacks", but the actual wording of the amendment leaves the door wide open to build any size smoking room.

There would be no food or beverage service in these smoking shelters, but there is nothing to prevent customers from taking food and drink in with

them. Someone who works there will have to go into these smoke-filled rooms on a regular basis to empty the ash trays and clean up the mess.

Our smoke-free law was thoroughly debated last year in the House and Senate. It was passed by a bipartisan majority and is overwhelmingly popular with Minnesotans (76% support it according to a statewide poll). Amending the smoke-free law in the middle of the night without public input or discussion was wrong. This amendment is a step backward and, if it becomes a law, will reverse the health gains we have achieved. (see "Smoke-free law..." page 2)

## MN Department of Health brings curtain down on "smoking plays" in bars

Minnesota's smoke-free law permits smoking by actors as part of a theatrical performance. A small group of bar owners scattered around the state tried to misuse this exception and bring smoking back to bars.

The bar would announce that they were having a "theater night". As customers came in, they would buy a button to wear and become part of the "cast". The end result? A bar with customers smoking indoors in violation of state law.

The state Department of Health (MDH) consulted with the Attorney General. This process took a few weeks. During this time some bars started to have "smoking plays" all day every day.

This all ended when MDH announced that the "smoking plays" were in violation of state law and that they would begin enforcement action against bars that continued to have them. Several bar owners have been cited for violations and will have to appear in court.

## HOW TO CONTACT US

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[www.smokefreegc.org](http://www.smokefreegc.org)

## Smoke-free law made Minnesota a healthier place to work



The first medical study to measure the health impact of Minnesota's smoke-free law was released in March. This study was a joint project of the University of Minnesota Cancer Center and ClearWay Minnesota.<sup>1</sup> The participants were all nonsmokers who work in bars, restaurants or bowling alleys where people used to smoke. To be eligible for the study, the participants could not live with a smoker or be exposed to secondhand smoke anywhere but at work.

The study measured the levels of tobacco-specific substances in the workers' bodies. Urine samples were tested prior to the new law's implementation on October 1, 2007, and again after the smoke-free law took effect.

When nonsmokers breathe tobacco smoke, their bodies absorb nicotine. Most of the nicotine breaks down into a chemical called cotinine. The results of the study show that levels of cotinine decreased by 83 percent after the participants' workplaces became smoke-free. Another significant finding is that levels of NNAL, a byproduct of a lung cancer-causing toxin found in tobacco smoke, decreased by 85 percent.

The study concludes that Minnesota's smoke-free law has had a significant impact in reducing exposure and absorption of cancer causing chemicals and nicotine in hospitality workers.

1. Hatsukami, Jensen, Hecht, Murphy. Carcinogen and nicotine exposure in hospitality workers before and after the state comprehensive smoking ban. Minneapolis, MN University of Minnesota, March 2008. [www.turc.umn.edu](http://www.turc.umn.edu)