

Popular Family Recreational Complex Goes Smoke-Free



Process of creating CHANGE

Over the course of nine months, the Eastern Region ?Y Youth Empowerment Center conducted a smoke-free advocacy campaign led by youth and guided by adults. They worked with business and community leaders to convince a popular family-oriented establishment to go 100% smoke-free. The process began when the Adult Coordinator of ?Y worked with youth to build their critical awareness of the impact of secondhand smoke on the health and economic life in the community, as well as the importance of smoke-free environments for creating lasting change. With this in mind, the youth chose Alleigh's Restaurant as the focus for a smoke-free advocacy campaign. Alleigh's is unique in that it has much to offer family members of all ages: an extensive game room with many different types of games and virtual rides; at least three different bars; and a family dining area. The game room is frequented often by youth of all ages, yet the smoky bar was located adjacent to it with no separation.

The ?Y Team sponsored the initial phase of the campaign as a training event to build the advocacy skills of youth in the team and also in the surrounding communities. The training included media and smoke-free advocacy basics, followed by a special evening at Alleigh's restaurant that provided opportunities for youth to become advocates for smoke-free environments. The event was organized months in advance after receiving approval from Alleigh's to go smoke-free for the evening. The banquet for training participants included awards by local and national dignitaries and media coverage. This was part of the advocacy strategy to create "buy-in" through positive media and recognition for Alleigh's owner. Youth were given center stage during the evening: they created the agenda and interview questions, conducted an educational booth on ETS during the event, greeted patrons, interviewed patrons about their smoking preferences and took part in the awards ceremony. The Mayor of Wilmington participated and greeted patrons at the door. Patrons who filled out the survey were eligible for gift certificates. ?Y collected 16 surveys and dozens of pictures and qualitative interviews of patrons in the arcade, restaurant and bar area. Two local media outlets (TV, newspaper) provided excellent coverage.

The event was followed up by a meeting with Alleigh's owner, led by youth along with the adult coordinator,

Using a Fact Sheet format, ?Y shared patron responses.

While the owner was impressed with the event, he requested additional surveys to be convinced of going 100% smoke free. ?Y planned to conduct more surveys, however, during follow-up several months later, the owner met with ?Y and relayed that he had decided to go smoke-free after his own informal "survey" of patrons waiting in line for the smoke-free section on busy evenings.



?Y Youth Evaluator shares the numbers

Importance of the CHANGE

According to the US Preventive Task Force, creating smoke-free environments is one the most effective strategies for reducing harm caused by tobacco smoke (www.thecommunityguide.org). By choosing a popular family oriented facility that exposed youth directly to large amounts of tobacco smoke (the bar and arcade were in the same room), the ?Y Team was able to have a great impact immediately. The youth will no longer witness adults smoking (norm change) or be exposed to harmful tobacco smoke. The ?Y Team was also able to generate a good deal of media coverage by using the strategy of garnering local policy maker support (Mayor and hospital officials) and having a large youth presence.

What we learned about CHANGE

- Recognize the "bottom line": Create reasons for business owners to participate in the campaign by holding an event that will support the business while getting out your advocacy message.
- Get support from key allies: Community leaders such as local officials, business owners and state representatives often appreciate the opportunity to meet with constituents (photo op!) in a positive environment.
- Get media coverage: Work with the media early on to get them involved and ready to cover the event.
- Follow-up & include youth: Follow-up is critical to keep the issue on the table. Plus, youth making the "ask" gives them an important opportunity, personalizes the request and impresses a conscientious business owner.

Type of Change:	Environmental Policy
Location of Change:	Alleigh's, Wilmington, NC
Reach of Change:	Employees and customers
Contact:	stevejohnson@whatswhat.org