

Gifford's Famous Ice Cream Promotes Tobacco-Free Living Across Maine



At A Glance

Somerset Public Health (SPH) offered to help establish tobacco-free workplace policies and Gifford's of Skowhegan Maine responded with enthusiasm for both their Dairy and the Gifford's Famous Ice Cream stands. They serve more than one million cones each summer from five family-owned and operated stands across Maine! SPH is one of several partners working with the MaineHealth Center for Tobacco Independence's Tobacco Prevention Services to help create tobacco-free spaces and promote tobacco-free living through education and technical assistance.



Public Health Challenge

People who use tobacco products generally know it is bad for their own health, but adult smoking also exposes others, including children and pets, to toxic secondhand smoke and poisonous thirdhand tobacco residues. According to the US CDC, there is no risk-free level of secondhand smoke exposure and even brief exposure can be harmful to a person's health. Adult smoking also undermines school-and community-based efforts to prevent youth from starting tobacco use in the first place. Somerset County's adult smoking rate of 25.4% is tied with Aroostook County for being Maine's highest, while our rate of exposure to second hand smoke is 35.4%, which exceeds the state average by 4.3 points (Maine Public Health Association). Our smoking rate was a factor in the recent poor health outcomes ranking of 14 out of 16 counties (2019 County Health Rankings).

Find Out More

For more information on tobacco prevention efforts in Somerset County or to partner with Somerset Public Health (SPH) in this work, please visit our webpage:

<https://somersepublichealth.org/state-resources-to-quit-smoking/>

or like, follow us on, and share our social media posts:

www.facebook.com/SomersetPublicHealth/

and

www.instagram.com/somersepublichealth/.

This work is supported by the Maine Health Center for Tobacco Independence <https://ctimaine.org/>.

"Our team recently had the pleasure of working with Somerset Public Health and Deb Casey, who are experts in implementing a Tobacco Free Workplace Policy. They made it easy to formalize our smoking policy by providing a small grant with a written template and free signage to display at our facilities. Because of this change and their guidance, Gifford's now has a healthier work environment for employees and is a healthy choice for customers as they visit our ice cream stands."

-Lindsay Skilling, Gifford's CEO

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Approach

Somerset Public Health provided technical assistance to develop a new policy, offered a mini-grant to offset related staffing and supply costs, supplied information on quitting resources for an open enrollment event, assisted in ordering signs to communicate the new policy to staff and customers, provided written guidance for maintenance staff on sign placement at stands in five different communities, and offered assistance writing articles to promote the new policy in-house and in the community. SPH is proud of the work Gifford's has done and is ready to assist others interested in implementing tobacco prevention efforts as one environmental strategy to positively impact health in their communities.

Results

Gifford's Dairy and Gifford's Famous Ice Cream's tobacco-free workplace policies benefit both their employees and customers by encouraging tobacco-free living. Many youth and young adults work at the ice cream stands as seasonal staff. Youth are especially vulnerable to social and environmental influences to use tobacco. This policy reduces these influences and creates public spaces free from the harsh effects of secondhand smoke. Families can visit, picnic, and enjoy mini-golf and batting cages without placing themselves or their children at risk. Somerset Public Health is grateful to have Gifford's Ice Cream as a prevention partner willing to set a proactive example for other Somerset County businesses to follow.



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What's Next

Somerset Public Health hopes to use our experience with the Gifford's dairy plant and retail operations as a model for engaging additional partners. SPH continues to reach out to area businesses, work places, schools, municipalities, organizations, and agencies offering informational toolkits and technical assistance to increase the number of tobacco-free environments for the residents of our county and to normalize the tobacco-free lifestyle