

Maine Tobacco Prevention Success Story: P.A.W.S. Leads the Pack

Summary:

P.A.W.S. Animal Adoption Center (PAWS) adopted a “best-level” model tobacco- and vape-free policy and became the first recipient of a policy mini grant from the Knox County Community Health Coalition (KCCHC). PAWS Executive Director Shelly Butler then opened doors leading to additional workplaces adopting model tobacco-and vape-free policies.

Challenges

There is no safe level of secondhand smoke exposure (U.S. Surgeon General). This is true for pets as well. Long-nosed dogs exposed to secondhand smoke have an increased risk for nose cancer, while short-nosed dogs are more likely to have lung cancer. Cats are 2-3 times more likely to develop Lymphoma, depending on length of exposure (BreatheEasyMaine.org).

Studies cited by the U.S. Surgeon General also show that separation, cleaning the air, and ventilation systems do not eliminate exposures to secondhand smoke. Smoking in lodging facilities increases costs as well. Therefore, by 2017, over 85% of U.S. hotels offered only non-smoking rooms (The Economist, 2017).

“PAWS puts the safety of both the people and animals at our shelter above all else. We have always been careful at PAWS but we saw this as an opportunity to really look at our policies and signage and consider how we can do better. Under our new policies, we’re much more confident our animals, staff, and visitors are safe and we feel good knowing others will follow. It’s a wonderful thing that KCCHC is doing. We’re so glad to be part of it.”

-----Shelly Butler, PAWS Executive Director



Results/Success

After upgrading its own workplace tobacco- and vape-free policy, PAWS Animal Adoption Center provided outreach to other area businesses, resulting in lodging tobacco- and vape-free policies at three luxury Bed and Breakfast facilities in Camden within a month. KCCHC awarded policy mini grants to the four workplaces.

It might be spring now, but PAWS Animal Adoption Center in Camden prompted much-welcomed snowballing of workplace and lodging policies for KCCHC this quarter. For over a year, PAWS has included rack cards about the dangers to pets of secondhand smoke in its adoption packets. When KCCHC offered policy mini grants, PAWS was the first to jump at the chance to revise their policy to Best Level. The Executive Director then had Becky Hayes Boober present at the Camden Area Business Group. Three area Bed and Breakfasts then requested assistance to upgrade their policies and receive policy mini grants. The Chamber and area media published stories on the efforts.

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