



# The Road to Smoke Free Public Places

*Building Communities for Better Health (BCBH) funding (2018-2021) from the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) is helping the Harrison County Health and Wellness Coalition (HAWC) promote smoke and tobacco-free environments in public spaces.*

## The Challenge

Firsthand smoking and secondhand smoke and vape aerosol—or the fumes that are emitted when smokers use cigarettes, pipes, cigars, e-cigarettes, or other tobacco products—pose harmful health effects. While smoking and vaping directly are worse, nonsmokers who inhale secondhand smoke or vape aerosol, even for as little as five minutes, are exposed to chemicals such as nicotine, carbon monoxide, and formaldehyde. There is no safe level of secondhand smoke exposure. Regular secondhand smoke and vape aerosol exposure can lead to a variety of health issues in adults, but children are even more vulnerable because they breathe faster and their bodies and brains are still developing.

## The Solution

Smoke and tobacco-free environments prevent initiation of tobacco use, encourage quitting, and protect nonsmokers from the harms of exposure to secondhand smoke and vape aerosol. While Missouri does not have a statewide 100% smoke-free law like many other states, over 30 municipalities have adopted a 100% smoke-free workplace, restaurant, and bar law. Through BCBH, the city of Bethany has joined this national and state movement to ensure its residents and visitors have reduced exposure to secondhand smoke and vape aerosol in two prominent public places — workplaces and parks.

Working adults spend most of their waking hours at their place of employment. Further, the American Lung Association reports that many individuals are at risk of, or have, lung diseases or respiratory illnesses such as asthma and COPD. Secondhand smoke and vape aerosol can cause or exacerbate these conditions. Maintaining healthy indoor air quality is an important step to ensure employee (and customer) health and wellness.



Improving workplace health also makes sense from a cost perspective, as a healthier workforce means reduced health care costs, absenteeism, increased productivity and morale, more profitability and a better work environment.

In many communities, like Bethany, parks and outdoor recreation facilities are not only public spaces but have shared use with the local school district. These spaces need to be safe and accessible. Prohibiting smoking and electronic cigarette use helps keep people safe from secondhand smoke and vape aerosol while protecting the environment. This is especially important for kids to be able to play without exposure to secondhand smoke or vape aerosol or cigarette/e-cigarette litter.

***All Missourians deserve to  
work and play in smoke-free  
environments!***

## The Outcomes

All businesses in Bethany, over 180, received an invitation to learn about smoke-free workplaces and participate in a survey about their smoking policy and practice to share cessation information with employees. Almost half (47%) agreed to participate and 68 businesses indicated they were smoke-free. Twenty-two (22) businesses already had a written smoke-free policy, 15 businesses requested assistance to create a formal policy and to provide cessation resources for their employees.

Approximately 1,200 workers in Bethany are not exposed to secondhand smoke on the job because their employer offers a smoke-free workplace.

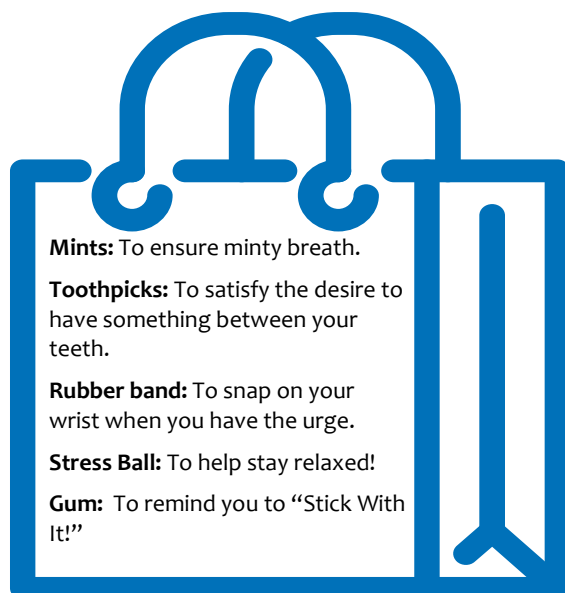
## Access to Smoke-free Air | Success Story



Smoke-free businesses were offered to be featured in a Smoke-Free Honor Roll display ad in the local newspapers and given Breathe Easy Bethany decals so patrons would know they offer clean smoke-free air.

Harrison County Community Hospital was one of businesses on the Smoke-Free Honor Roll. In addition to supporting employee health with its new tobacco-free campus policy, the hospital is also ensuring healthy air quality for its patients. To help both the employees and patients, the HAWC made “Quit Smoking Bags” which included a helpful stash of emergency essentials for those with an urge to smoke.

**“Quit Smoking Bags” offered to employees and patients...**



The HAWC Tobacco Subcommittee worked with the Bethany Parks and Recreation Board to approve the purchase and installation of 43 tobacco-free

signs in Bethany Parks and shared use recreation facilities.



The HAWC was also instrumental in displaying a billboard! With interstate traffic on I-35, it is estimated that 10,000-19,000<sup>2</sup> people see the “Breathe Easy Bethany” message daily, so residents and travelers on the busy MO interstate know they can find smoke-free options in Bethany.



### What’s Next?

The HAWC plans to build on the momentum created through BCBH to ensure Bethany has more smoke/tobacco-free public places. In months to come, HAWC plans to expand its efforts into Harrison County schools. Plans include developing a school-based tobacco prevention and cessation program to keep young people tobacco-free.

To learn more about our work call (660) 425-6324

