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Winter 2014

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WI Wins

Recognition

Coordinator Update



A Quarterly Insight into the Latest South Central WI Tobacco Free Coalition Happenings

# Tobacco Free News

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## Wisconsin Kids Increasingly Able to Buy Tobacco Products

*State Reports 35 percent Increase in Tobacco Sales to Minors*

It's getting easier for Wisconsin kids to buy tobacco products. The Wisconsin Department of Health Services issued a report yesterday showing a 35 percent increase from 2009 to 2012 in the number of retailers who sold tobacco to minors.

The report comes at a time when the state's tobacco control program, which carries out retailer compliance checks, is operating at near record low funding and as state tobacco tax loopholes are allowing some tobacco products to dodge the state cigarette tax; making several products cheaper and more affordable for kids.

Since 2000 Wisconsin's youth smoking rate has been slashed to a record low of 13 percent, yet advocates warn this success is at risk. Specifically, public health groups point to increased use of so-called "little cigars". These "cigars" are essentially just cigarettes wrapped in brown paper, but due to a state tax loophole they sell for as little as \$1.00 rather than the \$6.00 to \$7.00 per pack for regular cigarettes. They also come in flavors like grape, cherry and chocolate. In 2011, for the first time, little cigar use exceeded that of traditional cigarettes among Wisconsin high school students.

The Legislature is currently considering a bipartisan bill authored by Representative Garey Bies (R-Sister Bay) that would close this and other tobacco tax loopholes and ensure all such products are taxed at the level of cigarettes.

The state's tobacco prevention program has had its budget cut 66 percent in the five years and as such has been forced to dramatically scale back the number of retail sales compliance checks from 9,000 to just 4,000 annually.

"Surely this significant reduction in randomized checks along with decreased education and engagement with retailers is leading to increased tobacco sales to minors," said Dona Wininsky, director of public policy and communications for the American Lung Association in Wisconsin. "We need to maintain our comprehensive approach to tobacco control in Wisconsin and this includes adequate funding for programs that monitor youth access to tobacco as well as equitable enforcement of the cigarette tax."



South Central Wisconsin  
Tobacco Free Coalition

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[www.facebook.com/ScwTobaccoFreeCoalition](http://www.facebook.com/ScwTobaccoFreeCoalition)

## Adams County

SCW Tobacco Free Coalition collaborated with the Adams County Sheriff's Department to complete WI Wins, tobacco retailer compliance checks in Adams County. Unfortunately, in 2013, **ten** Adams County tobacco retailers sold tobacco products to minors bringing the total sales rate in Adams County to **37%**. In order to educate local retailers, the Adams County Sheriff's Department, District Attorney, Health Officer, Sheriff's Deputy and the coalition issued a joint letter encouraging retailers to train their employees on [www.smokecheck.org](http://www.smokecheck.org). Hopefully this education will reduce the number

of sales in the years to come. The coalition recognized the Adams County Sheriff's Department for their assistance completing checks and for their support of the program.



## Juneau County



Throughout 2013, the South Central Wisconsin Tobacco Free Coalition has been working with Mauston High School students on FACT, a youth tobacco prevention program, to encourage their fellow students not to use tobacco products. One of the students, Kyle Barribeau, has been elected to the FACT State Board to represent the Mauston High School and has been influential to the success of the Mauston FACT group. Recently, the students in Mauston "chalked the walk" and used to chalk in front of the high school to spread their message.

## Richland County

Over the last several months, with cooperation of the Richland County Sheriff's Department, 16 compliance checks were completed in Richland County and there were zero sales to a minor. This gives Richland County a sale rate of 0%!



Also, the South Central Wisconsin Tobacco Free Coalition has been partnering with the Richland County Children and Families Advocacy Council (RCCFAC) to protect and promote public awareness, parent and child education, professional education, and staff development in child abuse/neglect and substance abuse issues within the home and community throughout 2013.

## Sauk County

The South Central Wisconsin Tobacco Free Coalition has been working with Baraboo High School SADD students on a youth tobacco prevention initiative, FACT. The students have been busy this year "Dressing the Part" as well as painting a downtown Baraboo business window to spread the message about tobacco and its harmful effects.



# Jeff Melby Recognized for Dedication to Tobacco Prevention & Control



Jeff Melby, Portage, has been a long time supporter of tobacco prevention and control efforts in Wisconsin. For over four years, Melby has dedicated his time to educating the community on the dangers of Other Tobacco Products, promoting the Smoke-Free Air law, keeping tobacco out of the hands of minors, sustaining tobacco prevention efforts throughout the state, and assisting the South Central Wisconsin Tobacco Free Coalition.

Melby conducted WI Wins tobacco retailer compliance checks to ensure retailers are complying with the law and not selling tobacco products to minors. Judy Spring, Baraboo, former coordinator for the Sauk County Tobacco Free Coalition, recalls Melby's work on compliance checks, one of the most important strategies in preventing youth addiction to nicotine. Melby worked with local law enforcement and trained youth volunteers to monitor establishments selling tobacco. Spring said, "More than once I recall him shaking his head in disbelief as adults at the point of sale failed to ask for proof of age from the teen volunteers. Jeff then had to go back into the convenience store or bar or restaurant and speak with the clerk and manager. Once in awhile it was unpleasant. He approached these situations with great calm and patience, with a clear commitment to the overall public health aim of keeping kids healthy."

Not only has Melby been involved with the South Central Wisconsin Tobacco Free Coalition, he has also been an Advisory Board member for the Tobacco Free Columbia-Dane County Coalition (TFCDC) for the past four years. Melby has also provided leadership and direction to coalition efforts; including tobacco compliance, smoke-free air, and youth prevention in Columbia and Dane Counties. "If TFCDC had more advocates like Jeff, our County and State would be healthier and tobacco use would be less prevalent," said Ryan Sheahan, TFCDC Coordinator.

Long time South Central Wisconsin Tobacco Free Coalition supporter, Karen Torgerson, has enjoyed working with Melby over the years. "Jeff and I worked very closely during my year with AmeriCorps with the Sauk County Tobacco Free Coalition. Jeff is a creative advocate for tobacco-free workplaces and especially for youth. I think for both of us the best day was being in the room as Governor Doyle signed the Smoke-Free Workplace Bill. He later went to the Governor's mansion for the reception celebrating the bill's enactment. Made big points with his daughter! No matter what Jeff is doing, it will be to help improve life for our young people," concluded Torgerson.

**Thank you Jeff for your dedication and passion for tobacco prevention and control and making Wisconsin communities a healthier place to live, work, and play.**

## 2013 WI Wins Tobacco Sales Rates to Minors

In 2013, the SCW Tobacco Free Coalition completed a total of 149 WI Wins tobacco retailer compliance checks. Unfortunately, **40** tobacco retailers sold tobacco products to minors. Here is a break down by county.



Adams County	37% sales rate (27 checks/10 sales)
Juneau County	12.5% sales rate (40 checks/5 sales)
Richland County	0% sales rate (16 checks/0 sales)
Sauk County	39.7% sales rate (66 checks/25 sales)

**Interested in tobacco prevention?**  
Contact the coalition at [ccupp@co.juneau.wi.us](mailto:ccupp@co.juneau.wi.us) to learn how you can become involved!

SMOKE



CHECK

Selling tobacco to minors is wrong. It's also illegal. Smokecheck.org is an easy online tool to learn the facts about Wisconsin's tobacco sales laws. When you know the facts, you can avoid a big mistake and expensive citations for you and your employer. When you know how to keep tobacco away from minors, everybody wins.

# *final thoughts...*



Happy New Year!

2013 was a great year for the South Central Wisconsin Tobacco Free Coalition. The coalition supported two FACT groups, Mauston and Baraboo, who worked hard to encourage their peers to be tobacco free. The students were out and about in their communities and completed more than 10 activities. It is so great to see youth getting involved in tobacco prevention efforts!

I also had the opportunity to meet with many new coalition supporters, and I am excited to see how these relationships grow in 2014. The coalition also had the opportunity to present to several community groups throughout 2013 which allowed us to demonstrate need for tobacco prevention resources in Adams, Juneau, Richland and Sauk Counties.

I would like to thank all of you for attending meetings or events, working with youth, and helping create healthier communities through your support of the South Central Wisconsin Tobacco Free Coalition in 2013 and beyond.

Best Wishes in 2014,

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## *Up Coming Events*

- **March 3rd: Coalition Meeting 12:00-1:00 PM**  
Adams Community Center

Watch your email for upcoming events throughout 2014!

**Don't forget to like us on Facebook:**  
[www.facebook.com/ScwTobaccoFreeCoalition](http://www.facebook.com/ScwTobaccoFreeCoalition)

A collaborative multi-jurisdictional coalition for Adams, Juneau, Richland, and Sauk Counties promoting tobacco prevention initiatives