

CAMPAIGN CHRONICLES

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www.californialung.org/thecenter

SUPPORT SWELLS FOR SMOKE-FREE BEACHES

Community Organizing Wave Pays off

By Brian Peterson,
Project Director

Thanks to the successful organizing efforts of local tobacco control advocates, more Southern California beaches will be providing a smoke-free environment.

In separate votes within days of one another in late April, both the Los Angeles City and Santa Monica City Councils approved beach smoking bans that combine to create a 13-mile section of smoke-free coastline that contains some of the most popular beaches in the world. The ban will cover an area from Malibu to Manhattan Beach and will begin to go into effect in 30 days from the official signing expected

sometime during the first week of May.

“There has been a real coming together of public health, volunteer, and environmental communities,” said Robert Berger, director of Communities Organized Against Smoking and its Trash (COAST), working under the L.A. County Tobacco Control & Prevention Program.

“It was certainly critical to have the American Lung Association, American Cancer Society and American Heart Association with us every step of the way. But the Surfrider Foundation, one of the nation’s preeminent environmental organizations, also played a significant role as did individual residents and activists,” continued Berger.

Smoking will also be prohibited on

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Recipe for Success:

*Reaching
Decision Makers with the
Right People*

By Jim Smith,
Campaign Consultant

One of the most important ingredients to a successful policy initiative is to be well organized and that requires a group to know the community in which they live! This may seem obvious to some of you, but often persons involved in health promotion are apolitical and know little or nothing about their local decision makers. Of course, it is not necessary to know decision makers to win a campaign, but it is necessary to have allies who do know decision makers. Otherwise, your policy initiative is doomed to go nowhere fast!

The key to success in a campaign is having allies, people on your side who may not be an active part of your core group, but who have connections to local decision makers. These allies are called Key Opinion Leaders. In **other words**, they are the people who have access to and influence with the people you need for a policy victory. Key opinion leaders can be business leaders, teachers, farmers, reporters, union leaders, clergy, personal friends of elected officials, academics and social service or non-profit directors. Actually, the list could go on and after reading this it might be helpful to try to write your own list of key opinion

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KEY UPDATES

New materials and resources are continually being added to our website that you may find useful in your campaign planning and organizing activities.

Legislative News: Items recently added to the website include detailed information on tobacco related bills currently under consideration by the state legislature at: <http://www.californialung.org/thecenter/legislative/documents/April04Legupdate.doc> and a voting record that allows you to look up how your legislator voted on key tobacco bills during the last legislative session at: <http://www.californialung.org/thecenter/legislative/documents/2003votearchart.pdf>.

Local Action: Learn how other communities have tackled issues like tobacco retailer licensing, smoke-free entryways, and smoke-free shared housing.

Campaign Resources: New materials are being added that may support your campaign activities. Look for them under our Community Organizing section.

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most of the Santa Monica Pier, with some designated smoking areas created to appease businesses that fear the potential loss of tourism dollars.

Organized

Key to their community organizing efforts, Berger says it was important to first assess the political environment. This included understanding and respecting the City Council's process, working with appropriate commissions and community leaders to gain support prior to approaching the council. It also meant researching the prior voting record and leanings of individual council members on tobacco and other health/environmental issues. Advocates were then armed with information they could use in communications with council members and in public testimony.

Berger adds, "We also did a lot of phone calling and emailing. We called on our support system when we really needed them. Giving individuals and organizations a meaningful stake in passing these vital policies is what really made this happen."

Key Lessons Learned in this Campaign:

- Find your champion to be a driving force.
- Establish broad ownership of the issue.
- Understand the political climate before you move forward.
- Be sensitive to the business community.
- Understand and anticipate your opposition.
- Know when and how to effectively work with the media.
- Be flexible, as public policy is a fluid process.

A Line in the Sand

While these latest victories add to a growing number of smoke-free beaches, there have also been some recent setbacks for groups working in Encinitas and Redondo Beach. Common arguments against these policies include the questioning of the harmful effects of secondhand smoke outdoors, perceived encroachment on civil liberties, and the amount of tobacco litter discarded by beachgoers directly onto the beach as opposed to that which goes from city streets and into storm drains. To counter these, advocates effectively made the case for the rights of the vast majority (84%) of us that do not smoke, that no exposure to secondhand smoke is safe, and also demonstrated that both sources of tobacco litter are significant contributors to the overall problem.

Congratulations to the advocates of COAST and its community partners. Their efforts are taking California ever closer to truly becoming the nation's "Non-Smoking Section." These successes are inspiring similar efforts in other parts of the state and in other states like Hawaii, and as far off as Australia. If you would like more information about these recent campaigns, contact Robert Berger at rberger@healthiersolutions.com.

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leaders in your community.

Once you have a list of key opinion leaders and a specific policy objective in mind (what you want to ask for), then it's time to begin approaching them. How? Well, first you write out

beside each name of a key opinion leader the name of a person who may know that person. You also find out who on your coalition knows the key opinion leader and then you set up face-to-face meetings and ask them for help. If you don't have personal access to the key opinion leader, it may be necessary to take additional time to cultivate a relationship so that they begin to respond more readily to your requests for meetings. It will also be necessary to be prepared for these meetings by knowing something about the key opinion leader before you meet (their background, affiliations, interests, personal style, etc.).

After you've made a connection and know a little about them, then you seek to make connections between their interests and yours. You do this by briefly introducing yourself and your concern and then asking open-ended questions. Most importantly, you listen! You listen to their concerns and then adjust your requests based on the information you're gathering in the meeting. **Talk, Listen and Adjust**, this is a handy tool to keep in mind for every meeting with someone you need to help you get what you want.

Finally, you must not expect an immediate "conversion" to your perspective. Don't try to force people to get involved in your campaign! You are looking for allies who are motivated, not unenthusiastic draftees. Have a range of things you ask them for, find as much common ground as possible and then try to establish a relationship that will bare fruit eventually, if not immediately. Again, **Talk, Listen and Adjust!** This is the key to becoming connected to influential people in your community and ultimately to policy victories.