



Well Worth It

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Volume 6 Extra!

Creating a Tobacco – Free Worksite: Lessons Learned

November 19 is the Great American Smokeout – an event that challenges people not to smoke cigarettes for 24 hours, hoping their decision to quit will last forever. November 19, 2009 is also the date that three of the most visible employers in Morgantown – **WVU Hospitals, University Health Associates & WVU Health Sciences Campus** - are becoming *tobacco-free campuses*. David Harshbarger, Wellness Manager of WVU Health Sciences Center and WCWV board member, recently shared a few “lessons learned” with the WCWV about the process.

... *the easiest thing...* getting others on board to build a coalition for positive change. The committee knew that to achieve maximum success in implementing a tobacco-free campus surrounding businesses and other community leaders *had* to be on board. Talks began in June 2009 for the WVU Hospitals to become a tobacco-free campus. Within *two* weeks of the initial discussions Monongalia Health and Health South Rehabilitation Hospital had joined their efforts.

University Health Associates and WVU Hospitals are private property – their transition to a tobacco-free campus was as easy as a change to their policies. However, the WVU Health Sciences Campus is a different issue as any changes to the campus policies must go through the Board of Governors, which requires a 30 day period for public comments.

... *the most difficult...* providing Nicotine Replacement Treatments (NRTs) in smaller doses. It is one thing to declare a tobacco-free campus but another to deal with the diverse tobacco-using populations that cross the thresholds of the hospital every. Consideration had to be given to in-patients, out-patients, visitors, students and certainly employees. Within these groups are those who want to quit, those who wish to continue using tobacco, and those who just need to manage their nicotine dependence and withdrawal symptoms while on campus.

The initial hope was to provide single sticks of nicotine gum. Unfortunately, due to FDA restrictions and repackaging issues, that hope was dashed. Instead, visitors are directed to the In-Patient Pharmacy which is charged with distributing mini-packs of Nicorette Gum (5 sticks) provided by GlaxoSmithKline. Patients have a separate protocol upon admission, which includes assessment of nicotine use, desire to quit and referral to quitline services. Physicians often have standing orders for Nicotine Replacement Treatments (NRTs). The hospital gift shop also sells nicotine replacement gum.

... *disciplinary action...* there are 4,000 employees of WVU Hospitals to consider. Those who violate the tobacco-free campus policy are subject to disciplinary action. Triple-carbon citations are issued by security officers – to the employee, supervisor and the vice-president of the department. Supervisors are encouraged to address excessive breaks and punctuality through disciplinary venues. The WVU Hospital System agreed that parking lots and personal vehicles would not be targeted areas of enforcement.

... *message...* the same, the same, and more of the same. All entities involved with the tobacco-free campus agreed that a unified voice and logo is a key component. The same logo and the same signage was key. The WV Quitline is promoted to all employees and visitors as an option for quitting. The WV Quitline provides free information and materials on tobacco, pharmaceutical support, and individual phone coaching.

For more information on developing or strengthening your tobacco-free campus policies please contact the Wellness Council at (304) 722-8070.