



Smoking Ban

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A local town stamps out cigarette smoking in many popular outdoor areas, in an effort to set a better example for kids.

Smoking is already banned in most indoor public places. But starting next month in Niskayuna, smoking will be off limits in many outdoor areas as well. The Town Board voted Thursday night to prohibit smoking at all outdoor facilities where sporting events and outdoor recreation activities draw young people. The law will cover playgrounds, pools, dog & skate parks, as well as hike & bike paths. It also includes parking lots, concession stands, bleachers and pavilions.

NEWS10's Tracy Egan explains why the town is so fired up about expanding the smoking ban.

Town Councilwoman Julie McDonnell says she spearheaded the drive to banish smoking, for the kids.

"When it comes to the areas where our children are playing and where we're recreating, it's not a great example to set for the kids," says McDonnell. "And the second-hand smoke - the dangers of that are not mitigated by being outdoors."

Now the town held public hearings inviting people who were opposed to the smoking ban to come and speak out, but no one did. It seems everyone was in agreement in this town - at least that if you come to the great outdoors to exercise and breathe in clean air, you should not let that experience be spoiled by second-hand smoke.

"Here it is, cigarette butt - the most littered item in the world," Jeanie Orr, with the Tobacco-Free Coalition says, as she points to a cigarette butt on the ground.

It was the pictures Orr took of the cigarette butts she found littering town parks that made a broad smoking ban an easy sell to the town board. And those who would argue that banning smoking in public areas infringes on their rights will not have any success waving the flag in the town supervisor's face. Joe Landry's dad is battling lung cancer.

"I don't see it as a constitutional issue," says Niskayuna Town Supervisor Joseph Landry. "We're trying to educate people."

And now, the Tobacco-Free Coalition wants to take the ban to a park near you!

"I'm hoping that it will catch on, and that we plan on going to all the other municipalities in Albany, Rensselaer and Schenectady counties," Orr says.

More than 40 municipalities have already banned smoking in at least some outdoor public areas. Starting July 1st, if you light up near one of the "Young Lungs at Play" signs in Niskayuna, you could be fined up to 250-dollars.



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