

When Community Leaders Speak, People Listen

1. What is the purpose of the Thanks for Saying “No Thanks” (TSNT) campaign?

The TSNT campaign wants to build a consensus among community-based organizations that tobacco industry funding hurts communities far more than it helps them. Further, the campaign asks organizations to commit to tobacco-free funding.

Tobacco companies donate to community organizations to build their image as good corporate citizens. But no matter how generous the tobacco industry is with charitable giving, the truth remains that the money being donated comes from selling a product that kills more than 400,000 people each year.

By publicly stating their commitment to tobacco-free funding, non-profit organizations reinforce their already existing commitment to the social and economic health of the community. The message isn't intended for the tobacco industry; they won't be listening. The message is for the community, where people are listening.

2. Who is organizing the campaign?

Locally, TSNT is organized by the Capital District Tobacco-Free Coalition (CDTFC), a partnership of organizations and community members dedicated to reducing adolescent and adult use of tobacco through cooperative programs in prevention, cessation, advocacy, and community education. CDTFC is a Community Partnership of the New York State Tobacco Control Program, funded by a grant from the New York State Department of Health.

3. What is the campaign actually asking an individual organization to do?

The campaign is asking non-profit organizations to adopt a written policy stating they will not accept any funding or charitable donations — cash or in-kind — from tobacco parent companies. For the purposes of our TSNT campaign, “tobacco parent companies” include those businesses and corporations engaged in the production, manufacture, importation, packaging or primary marketing and distribution of tobacco products. This includes tobacco product manufacturers Altria, Philip Morris, R.J. Reynolds, Santa Fe Natural Tobacco Co., Lorillard, Liggett and U.S. Smokeless Tobacco (UST).

The policy is an internal document. As such, it has the same force of any other internal policy that the organization chooses to adopt and can be changed or modified accordingly. It is not a legal contract with any other entity.

To make an organizational policy meaningful to the community campaign, we ask that organizations that adopt a tobacco-free policy make the policy public. That way, although the policy may not be legally binding, it will carry the weight of a good faith agreement with the community the organization serves.

4. How does this benefit my organization?

- Demonstrates a dedicated concern for the health and well-being of those you serve, and highlights your support for the health of the entire Capital District community. CDTFC, with your consent, will publicize your participation in the campaign through its web site, press releases and paid media. (See smokefreecapital.org.)
- Denies tobacco companies access to your good name. Tobacco companies use sponsorship and charitable support to promote and heighten the visibility of their products and enhance their corporate image. They are responsible for more than 450,000 deaths in the U.S. alone, but would rather be known for their generosity than their deadly products.

5. Who else is doing this?

A current list of local agencies participating in the TSNT campaign is hosted on our agency website at <http://www.smokefreecapital.org/Exposed/nothanks.cfm>. To date, non-profit participants include the American Cancer Society, American Lung Association, American Heart Association, Animal Protective Foundation, GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network) New York Capital Region, Homeless Action Committee, In Our Own Voices, Inc., Schenectady's Promise – The Alliance for Youth, and Historic Albany Foundation. There are many government and business partners participating in the campaign as well.

Also, while this initiative is just getting underway in the Capital District, more than 400 businesses and organizations have established policies to refuse tobacco industry donations across the state and even more are doing so across the country.

6. Who has received funding from tobacco companies?

Some of the most prominent recipients of tobacco industry donations have historically been more than 200 organizations in New York which received a total of about \$7 million every year from the company known as the Altria Group (parent company of Marlboro maker Philip Morris). Altria moved its headquarters out of New York in fall of 2007 and, along with it, its support of the arts. The move was a shock to the arts community and was done purely to give Altria's foreign arm, Philip Morris International, more freedom to pursue emerging cigarette markets without being hindered by the regulatory and legal problems facing its business in the United States.

Closer to home, in 2005 Altria gave a total of \$205,000 to fund local organizations in domestic violence, the arts, AIDS/HIV, and the environment; and in 2006 gave another \$30,000 locally again to domestic violence and the arts. All told, the Capital Region has received nearly a quarter of a million dollars in financial contributions from the tobacco industry.

7. If we do this, wouldn't we alienate smokers and especially current donors who smoke?

The vast majority of adults living in the Capital Region — more than 80% — don't smoke or use any tobacco. More than 80% of Capital Region residents support expansion of the Clean Indoor Air Act (CIAA) for areas surrounding playgrounds and more than 70% support expansion of the CIAA around building entryways and municipal pools. Statewide, among those adults who smoke every day, 58% have tried to quit. These numbers suggest that you are more likely to gain the respect of a former smoker, a smoker who wants to quit, or someone who strongly favors smoke-free air as you are to lose favor with a committed smoker.

But more to the point, a tobacco-free funding policy is a pro-health policy. It doesn't place judgment on individual smokers. It makes a statement about the actions of tobacco companies and your unwillingness to allow them to use your good name to legitimize themselves as "good corporate citizens."

8. What is our next step?

CDTFC has prepared a sample policy against accepting money from the tobacco industry. Members of your board may review the sample document and, based on the information in this FAQ and discussions among those with a role in policy decisions, you may adopt the sample policy as is or make changes as appropriate. Additional resources and references will be provided upon request.

9. How do we get further information or assistance?

Please contact Theresa Zubretsky at CDTFC: call 233-1106 or email tzubretsky@setonhealth.org. More information on the Thanks for Saying "No Thanks" campaign is also available on the CDTFC web site at smokefreecapital.org.

10. Does accepting money from tobacco companies fit with our mission to better our community?

It's an important question. We hope you'll consider it seriously and make the decision to adopt a policy refusing tobacco industry funds. When you do, we and the rest of the community will say "Thanks" for saying "No Thanks."