



N.C. Smoke-Free/Tobacco-Free Parks Ayden first Pitt County Town to Make Parks Tobacco Free

Summary: The Town of Ayden, located in Pitt County, NC enjoys tobacco-free parks and recreation and provides a healthy example to children and young people. This has led to similar protection in other Pitt County towns.

Challenge: For many years people have been able to smoke in parks in Pitt County, NC, including the Town of Ayden. Efforts to improve the health of Pitt County through parks and recreation began a few years ago when a resolution to support a Board of Health Rule for tobacco-free parks was supported by all municipalities in Pitt County. Even with so much municipal support, the county commission voted against a county-wide policy to prohibit tobacco use in all Pitt County parks in 2014, because some commissioners saw tobacco use as an issue of individual choice.

Solution: Despite the county commission's failure to act, the Town of Ayden wanted to make a positive change to protect the health of their citizens, particularly children and young people. The Town of Ayden found they had the authority to pass a municipal ordinance for their parks system. Ayden Town Manager Steven Harrell and Ayden Arts and Recreation Director Thomas Duncan decided to revisit this effort in the summer of 2017. Region 10 Tobacco Prevention Coordinator Ally Moser presented information on tobacco-free parks to the Town of Ayden Arts and Recreation Board. The majority voted to support moving forward with a tobacco-free parks ordinance. With support from the Arts and Recreation Board, the Town Manager and the Regional Tobacco Prevention Manager, it was time to take the ordinance to the town council. At the first meeting, the councilmen voted to hold a public hearing to get town members' opinions. All speakers at the public hearing supported tobacco-free parks, and the ordinance passed. The ordinance went into effect January 1, 2018.

Results: As a result, Ayden became the first park in Pitt County to pass an ordinance. The ordinance prohibits the use of all tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, in all of the Town of Ayden's park properties including grounds, buildings and parking lots. Pitt County Health Director John Morrow, MD, presented the Town of Ayden with a "Community Health Hero" Award from the Pitt Partners for Health, the public health grassroots coalition. Despite the tobacco history that built many communities in Eastern North Carolina,

Quote

"There is simply no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke. Children who are exposed to secondhand smoke have a greater risk of developing respiratory problems, ear infections and asthma attacks. There is also a direct correlation between secondhand smoke and chronic diseases among adults. Tobacco-free parks eliminates exposure to secondhand smoke levels in these community outdoor places."
John H. Morrow, MD, Pitt County Health Director



Ayden was able to lead the way and is now a role model for surrounding communities. At this writing, the Pitt County towns of Winterville, Grifton and Bethel have adopted similar regulations.

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To learn more about smoke-free policies in N.C., visit www.tobaccopreventionandcontrol.ncdhhs.gov



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