

OR LGBTQ Tobacco Prevention Network News

Volume 1, Issue 1

Fall 2005

Welcome to the OR LGBTQ Tobacco Prevention Network!

- Our statewide program is supported by funding from the Oregon Department of Human Services.
- The Q Tobacco Prevention Network is a program of SMYRC (the Sexual Minority Youth Resource Center).

Inside this issue:

The "Jennings Effect"	2
About SMYRC	2
LGBTQ Tobacco Use	3

OR LGBTQ Tobacco Prevention Initiative

Welcome to the OR LGBTQ Tobacco Initiative's first newsletter! This summer marked the beginning of the OR LGBTQ Tobacco Prevention Initiative. This program is the second statewide tobacco prevention program focusing on LGBTQ folks, preceded by California's LGBT Partnership.

The OR LGBTQ Tobacco Initiative is part of a multicultural council of groups working to create culturally sensitive tobacco prevention programs for priority populations who have a higher risk of tobacco use. Other groups represented so far are: Latinos, Native Americans, Asian Pacific Islanders, and African Americans.

The Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) worked in partnership with a number of other organizations to create a statewide tobacco control plan for 2005-2010.

Partnering organizations included: American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, American Lung Association of Oregon,

Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board, and Tobacco-Free Coalition of Oregon. One of the primary goals in this plan is to eliminate disparities in tobacco use.

The main goal of the OR LGBTQ Tobacco Prevention Initiative is to reduce smoking among LGBTQ Oregonians through education, advocacy and policy change.



R.E. collects survey data at San Francisco Pride with Bob Gordon and Ted Guggenheim from California's LGBT Partnership. Check out www.lgbtpartnership.org.

SMYRC Youth and Volunteers Collect Almost 600 Survey Responses

Results are still being assessed from the 593 survey responses collected at Portland's Pride Celebration in June.

Questions asked about smoking habits and policy interests, including:

- Whether respondents currently smoke cigarettes or use smokeless tobacco.
- How often respondents go to bars and their feelings about smoking in bars.



- Attitudes toward tobacco sponsorship of LGBTQ events.

Additionally, the survey asked how members of our community self-identify their gender and sexual orientation in order to advocate for broader categories in other surveys.

Watch for our report on how the responses added up...

And thanks for your help if you filled out one of our surveys!!

Beyond Quitting: Taking the Tobacco Industry to Task

In August newscaster Peter Jennings died of smoking-related lung cancer. With his high profile death people across the country have been calling cessation programs wanting to quit. The media have called this the “Jennings effect.”

The Advocate published a response from Barbara Warren of the LGBT Center in New York City. Warren raises some of the issues that should concern us about the tobacco industry. She writes:

“I think probably the best thing we can do right now is get [LGBT tobacco use] on the radar screen. It’s another way for us to take care of ourselves and to nurture our community.”

Scott Cook, Director of Community Services, Howard Brown Health Center

As Quoted in *Windy City Times* 8/03/2005.

“LGBT Community and Tobacco: Up in Smoke” by Amy Wooten.

“We are also a community that struggles: with the onslaught of stigma, discrimination, ongoing attacks from the Right, and the lack of consistent inclusion of our issues by the mainstream Left. So giving up the cheap and legal drug that acts as a sedative, a stimulant, and a defense against all the stressors we face still eludes the more than 30% of our population who smoke. In addition, the tobacco companies, although taking a much lower profile these days, still tempt LGBT organizations hard-pressed for cash with promises of corporate underwriting in exchange for adding a

smoking lounge promoting their product at an LGBT event or festival. As recently as last year, the LGBT Center was approached by a major tobacco company with an offer of corporate support for our youth program. They are no fools and have some nerve: Smoking rates among LGBT youth are reportedly at 59%, versus 25% for the general youth population.

But the motivation to quit has to go beyond personal and individual health concerns. We have known for many years that the tobacco industry, while courting LGBT organizations with promises of small donations has spent millions funding those very politicians who oppose our civil liberties and our rights to equal protection and equal access.”

(www.theadvocate.com/print_article_ektid19800.asp)

About SMYRC (the Sexual Minority Youth Resource Center)

SMYRC’s mission is to create safety and support for LGBTQ youth through youth empowerment, community building and education. Other SMYRC Programs include:

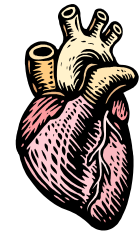
- The *SMYRC Resource Center* in southeast Portland offers a harassment-free and drug-free space for LGBTQ youth ages 23 and younger. Over 1000 youth per year come to use our computers, access resources, use the library, meet people, participate in mental health groups, make art and have fun! We also support a network of GSAs (Gay Straight Aliances).
- *Bridge 13* provides youth-led educational workshops for school and community

providers about issues that sexual and gender minority youth face.

- *Washington County Pride Project* supports LGBTQ youth ages 21 and younger in Washington County through weekly group meetings, HIV-prevention education, educational workshops, GSA support and more!

SMYRC is a program of Cascadia Behavioral Healthcare, a non-profit organization that provides mental health and addictions treatment at over 60 sites in Multnomah, Marion and Washington Counties. Find out more information at: www.smyrc.org and www.cascadiabhc.org.

Facts about LGBTQ Tobacco Use



There isn't a lot of good data about tobacco use among LGBTQ folks. By "good data" I mean studies that include a lot of respondents across a broad range of life experiences (age, race, income level, where people live, etc.), for starters. The evidence we have suggests that LGB and questioning folks smoke at much higher rates than straight people, regardless of our education level.^{1,2}

While some public health advocates have recommended inclusion of sexual orientation on major health surveys, there is almost *no* information available about transgender folks and tobacco use. From what we can see among the folks we know in our lives and from what we can infer from other evidence about high risk behaviors and life stresses faced by transgender people, it is believed that transgender people smoke at much higher rates than non-transgender people.

Tobacco use impacts all members of our communities—whether our health is directly affected by our own use or through secondhand smoke from the people in our lives. Here is some basic information about tobacco use in our communities:

- Approximately 30-65% of LGB people smoke. (Straight folks smoke at a rate of about 20%.) Evidence suggests that LGB people of color smoke at the highest rates.³
- Oregon data from 2003 showed that 42% of gay and bisexual men smoke and 26% of lesbian and bisexual women smoke versus 21% among other adults. (There weren't enough people who identified as transgender to get accurate data on the prevalence of smoking among transgender Oregonians.)
- 38-60% of LGB youth smoke. Results of Austin, et al's 1999 study of 12-17 year old youth indicate that among LGB youth almost 40% smoke weekly. They are 6 times more likely to smoke in the past month, almost 10 times more likely to smoke weekly over the past year, and

almost 5 times more likely to report that most or all their friends smoke.³

So, how do all of these numbers add up? Think about it. Do a quick mental survey of LGBTQ folks you know whether they're friends, family or other members of your community. How many of them smoke? How often do you go to events in smoke-filled bars or clubs? Or choose not to go to events because of the secondhand smoke? Look at your favorite magazines, TV shows or movies—how often are LGBTQ folks represented as smokers? How often do you see tobacco advertised, whether directly or indirectly through product placement, at events or in magazines directed at LGBTQ audiences? Sometimes it almost seems like queer tobacco use is everywhere we look.

Let's talk within our communities. Let's take the time to educate ourselves and each other about the ways that the tobacco industry targets us and then supports the politicians fighting against us. Let's discuss the ways that the stressors that face us because of homophobia, heterosexism and transphobia combine to feed into the reasons why LGBTQ folks choose to use tobacco. And, finally, let's work together to change these systems that work to hurt us!

1. Case, P, S.B. Austin, D.J. Hunter, J.E. Manson, S. Malspeis, W.C. Willett, D.Spiegelman. 2004." Sexual Orientation, Health Risk Factors, and Physical Functioning in the Nurses' Health Study II." *Journal of Women's Health*. 13(9):1033-1047.
2. Ryan, Heather et al. 2001. "Smoking Among Lesbians, Gays, and Bisexuals: A Review of the Literature." *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. 21 (2):142-149.
3. Sanchez, John P., Peter Meacher, and Robert Beil. 2005. "Cigarette Smoking and Lesbian and Bisexual Women in the Bronx." *Journal of Community Health*.30(1):23-36.
4. Aaron, DJ, Markovic N, Danielson ME, Honnold JA, Janosky JE, Schmidt NJ. 2001. "Behavioral risk factors for disease and preventative health practices among lesbians." *Am J Publ Health*. 91:972-975.

*Tobacco kills more
LGBTQ people than
hate crimes,
alcohol,
suicide,
automobile accidents
and HIV/AIDS
combined.*

OR LGBTQ Tobacco Prevention Initiative

R.E. Szego, Program Coordinator
c/o SMYRC
2100 SE Belmont,
Portland, OR 97214

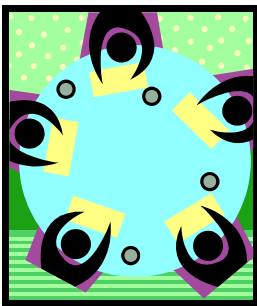
Phone: 503.784.5813
Fax: 503.231.3051
Email: r.e.szego@cascadiabhc.org

www.smyrc.org

As part of Oregon's statewide Multicultural Tobacco Council, the OR Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ) Tobacco Prevention Initiative develops culturally specific tobacco prevention strategies. Currently, we are building an LGBTQ Tobacco Prevention Network which promotes safe and smoke free places for LGBTQ people to socialize and connect with each other. We provide education and advocacy around LGBTQ tobacco use and how we are all impacted by the concerted tobacco industry efforts to target LGBTQ people. Additionally, we provide information and resources on LGBTQ tobacco issues.

Is your group or organization interested in learning more about tobacco use in the LGBTQ communities? Contact us!

Q Tobacco Network Begins Planning



On August 25, we held our first Q Tobacco Prevention Network planning meeting.

We are looking for folks interested in planning tobacco prevention events and strategies to attend monthly meetings.

"But I smoke!" Your insight will help us include empathy in our work and keep us from being patronizing. We want our messages and events to be relevant to smokers—as well as ex-smokers and non-smokers!

"But I don't smoke!" Does someone you care about smoke? Are you sick of our communities being exploited by huge corporations? Did you quit smoking successfully? The tobacco industry targets all of us... help fight back!

"But I'm not a youth!" While this is a program of SMYRC (the sexual minority youth resource center), it's for ALL of us! The Tobacco Prevention

Initiative is the *only* SMYRC program that focuses on LGBTQ youth and adults!

"But I am a youth!" Great! We need your voice and energy. Help keep this program accessible to other youth!

The main point...

We want lots of people involved!

Look for these upcoming events:

- Our next meeting: October 18, 2005, 5:30-7:30 pm. Please call for location information.
- Gay American Smoke Out in November (www.gaysmokeout.net).