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Air Quality in Grand Rapids Area Restaurants Deemed Very Unhealthy *Campaign for Smokefree Air continues its push for smokefree worksites around the state*

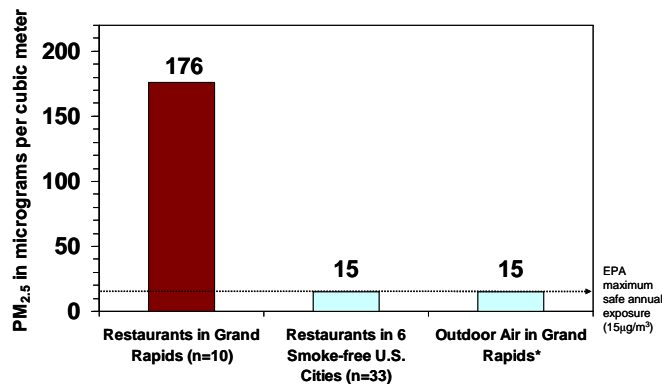
Lansing, Mich. – The Campaign for Smokefree Air (CSA) received the results of an air quality survey recently completed in Grand Rapids that showed patrons sitting in nonsmoking sections are not protected from deadly toxins.

The CSA Air Quality Tour visited 10 bars and restaurants on November 18 and 19, 2005. Results from the tests show that restaurants in the area are averaging a fine particle air pollution level of 176, which the Environmental Protection Agency deems very unhealthy. The level at which the EPA deems healthy is 15 and below.

“Results from the Grand Rapids air quality assessment prove that only smokefree establishments protect workers,” said Judy Stewart, campaign manger for Campaign for Smokefree Air (CSA). “Looking at the high level of fine particle air pollution also tells us that restaurant workers are exposed to deadly toxins every day.”

Figure 1

Average Fine Particle Air Pollution in Grand Rapids, MI



*2005 Annual average for Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2005 US EPA AirData report generated June 29th, 2006
<http://www.epa.gov/air/data>

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The bars and restaurants were visited and assessed on November 18 and 19, 2005, using the TSI SidePak AM510 Personal Aerosol Monitor. PM_{2.5} levels in these 10 locations were compared to similar locations in cities with smokefree air laws and to outdoor air in Grand Rapids. The 10 locations that were tested in Grand Rapids included smoking sections.

PM_{2.5} is the concentration of particulate matter in the air smaller than 2.5 microns in diameter. Particles of this size are released in significant amounts from burning cigarettes and are easily inhaled deep into the lungs. Key findings of the study include:

- The level of indoor air pollution was 12 times higher in Grand Rapids restaurants compared to both restaurants and outdoor air in smokefree cities around the United States (Figure 1).
- The level of air pollution was above the maximum annual safe exposure limit recommended by the EPA to protect public health in 9 of the 10 (90 percent) restaurants. The only place tested in Grand Rapids where the level of air pollution was below this limit was the one restaurant where there was no observed smoking.
- This study documented significant harmful levels of secondhand smoke, a known human toxin and carcinogen, in Grand Rapids restaurants. Policies that prohibit smoking in all parts of all public worksites dramatically reduce secondhand smoke exposure and improve worker and patron health.

The United States Surgeon General recently released a report on the deadly effects of secondhand smoke. The Surgeon General's report found that ventilation systems and "smoke eaters" merely eliminate the smell of smoke they do not eliminate the harmful toxins contained in secondhand smoke. The report stated that only smokefree establishments can completely protect adults and children from the toxins contained in secondhand smoke.

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“Many patrons and employees are still not aware of the serious health risks associated with secondhand smoke exposure,” said Stewart. “Secondhand smoke exposure at work causes bar and restaurant employees to be 50 percent more likely to develop lung cancer than the general population. It also will cause 12,000 otherwise healthy nonsmokers to die from some form of cancer, 3,000 specifically to lung cancer.”

CSA is working with a bipartisan team of state lawmakers to make Michigan smokefree. Sens. Ray Basham (D-Taylor) and Tom George (R-Kalamazoo Township) along with Reps. Barb Vander Veen (R-Allendale) and Brenda Clack (D-Flint) are each sponsoring measures to make workplaces, restaurants and bars smokefree. Sen. Basham is sponsoring Senate Bill 0394, Sen. George is sponsoring SB 0395, Rep. Vander Veen is sponsoring House Bill 4624 and Rep. Clack is sponsoring HB 4625. The legislation was introduced in April 2005, and awaits committee action.

A statewide poll, conducted by Troy, Mich.-based John Bailey & Associates on behalf of CSA, finds that nearly two-thirds of Michigan registered voters polled favor a new law creating smokefree environments in all Michigan workplaces

The Campaign for Smokefree Air is a grassroots coalition founded by the American Cancer Society, American Heart Association and American Lung Association of Michigan, as well as other statewide groups who support eliminating secondhand smoke dangers in workplaces, restaurants and bars. For more information about the Campaign for Smokefree Air, please visit www.MakeMIAirSmokefree.org.

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