



NEWS RELEASE

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BURSTEIN, LEGISLATORS JOIN MOVEMENT TO “SMOKE FREE” PARKS

Health, Environmental Concerns Are Behind Effort to Make Parks, Beaches “Smoke Free”

ERIE COUNTY, NY— Today, Erie County Health Commissioner Dr. Gale Burstein was joined by County Parks Commissioner Troy Schinzel, Erie County Legislators and members of the Roswell Park Cancer Institute Anti-Tobacco Coalition in announcing that Erie County parks and beaches will introduce a “smoke-free” policy. The policy is pursuant to legislation approved by the Erie County Legislature and is intended to protect both the parks and families.

“An estimated 88 million nonsmoking Americans, including 54% of children aged 3-11 years, are exposed to secondhand smoke. Nonsmokers inhale many of the same poisons in cigarette smoke as smokers, making just a brief exposure dangerous,” **said Dr. Burstein.** “Secondhand smoke exposure causes serious disease and death, including heart disease and lung cancer in nonsmoking adults and sudden infant death syndrome, acute respiratory infections, ear problems, and more frequent and severe asthma attacks in children. Smoke-free Erie County parks are safe and healthy for everyone!”

Parks Commissioner Schinzel said, “Asking park patrons to refrain from smoking in public recreation areas makes good sense. With this educational and informative signage, Erie County is showing a commitment to providing healthy, smoke free park areas, and we will continue to promote that message.”

“I am proud to be one of the sponsors of legislation we approved to prohibit smoking in Erie County parks,” **said Legislator Terrence D. McCracken, Chair of the Energy and Environment Committee.** “I endorse this effort because all people attending our county parks deserve to be able to breathe clean air and be in a healthy environment. While people choosing not to smoke are taking a major step in staying healthy, second-hand smoke from others is dangerous and can hurt their health. I believe it was very important for the County to send the right message, and not send out the wrong message to our youth concerning health and wellness. We must support the health and rights of all county parks users and residents.”

Erie County currently maintains nine parks and two beaches. Colorful new signage at each location, designed by local artist Michael Margolis, will indicate that the area is smoke-free and encourage all attendees to refrain from smoking.

“We applaud Erie County for its strong leadership in the fight against tobacco use, the number one cause of preventable death in the United States,” **said Andrew Hyland, PhD., Department of Health Behavior at Roswell Park Cancer Institute.** “By establishing rules prohibiting smoking in parks, Erie County has taken a significant step to create a healthier, greener, more family-friendly environment that protects everyone’s right to breathe clean, smoke-free air.”