

## **A new spin on smoke-free dining . . . . .**

**If you think workers and patrons shouldn't have to put up with secondhand smoke in restaurants, or any other workplace, this smoke-free sit-in is a creative way to send your message and keep your favorite restaurant smoke-free at the same time.**

**Age Group:** High school and above, but can be adapted for other ages

**Number of Participants:** As many as it takes to fill up the smoking section

**Time:** 3 weeks

**Resources:** Paper, poster board or palm cards, markers or access to a printer

**Cost:** \$20-\$40 for materials. Participants will need to cover their own meals at the restaurant and will need to get to the restaurant on their own.

What's so dangerous about secondhand smoke? Well, for starters, it contains more than 4,000 chemicals and 69 human carcinogens (cancer causing agents). According to the American Cancer Society, secondhand smoke causes lung cancer, other types of cancer and heart disease in nonsmokers, and exposure to secondhand smoke can cause children to develop asthma, bronchitis, pneumonia, other respiratory infections and ear infections. Food service workers appear to be 50 percent more likely than the general population to develop lung cancer. This is not surprising, since many of them are exposed to secondhand smoke on the job.

So what can you do? Stage a friendly sit-in. The plan is to fill all the tables in the smoking section for at least an hour while you eat with people participating in your activity. This way, no one is smoking and the restaurant is smoke-free as long as you are there.

This event can bring you tons of attention and definitely gets your point across in a way the restaurant and the community can't ignore. This event was organized successfully in Oklahoma City, OK with lots of students and lots of media coverage, thanks to the work of SWAT (Students Working Against Tobacco).

“Remember we want to show that going smoke-free doesn't hurt the restaurant. We don't hate the smokers or the restaurant; we just want the right to breathe clean air. Every year 750 Oklahomans die from secondhand smoke, and I am sure hundreds die in your state or country too. Restaurant workers and patrons both are exposed to this deadly secondhand smoke. You can take action in your community to stop it.” Koorosh Zahrai, 18, Edmond, OK

**Koorosh makes an important point; this activity needs to show that going smoke-free will not hurt the restaurant. So, it's very important to not only get your message across, but also be a good customer. Don't do this activity unless everyone plans on ordering a meal, paying for the meal and including a tip. Be polite to your server and other restaurant staff. Restaurant owners, managers and staff are much more likely to listen to polite customers that show them smoke-free workplaces are not only protect people's health, but will also bring in more patrons that appreciate the smoke-free dining environment.**

Here's how you can stage a sit-in in your area:

3 weeks out:

- Pick your restaurant. Make sure this restaurant is not too big for you to fill up. SWAT wanted to make sure it wasn't too expensive for their members to pay for themselves, so they chose a local Denny's. Make sure the restaurant you choose is in a convenient location.
- Send a few members out to count how many smoking seats are in the restaurant in order to know how many kids are needed.
- Assign a youth participant as the media contact. Make sure they are trained to talk to news media and can answer questions about the event if needed. Check out the KBD guide's media section for tips.
- Work with them to develop your key messages. Focus on the harmful effects of secondhand smoke, and the dangers it poses particularly to restaurant staff. Let people know workers and patrons deserve the right to breathe clean air.
- Develop materials to help to send your message at the sit-in. For example, you could create flyers or palm cards to leave behind with your check. These should highlight the dangers of secondhand smoke and why it is so important that restaurants go smoke-free.
- The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids has fact sheets available that address the dangers of secondhand smoke, as well as specific information about smoke-free workplaces that might be helpful as you develop your messages and materials. You can find all of these fact sheets at [www.tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets](http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets)
- If the media plans on covering the event, make sure you have posters to attract attention and cameras.
- If you are holding the sit-in as part of a larger campaign for smoke-free policies, you can use this event and the press coverage to ask people to support your policy initiative. Visit [www.tobaccofreekids.org](http://www.tobaccofreekids.org) for more information on the dangers of secondhand smoke and the benefits of smoke-free workplaces.
- Start building your list of media contacts.

#### 2 Weeks Out:

- Make signs and other materials like a card or flyer with more information about the dangers of secondhand smoke to leave with your check. Keep them on message and reference the resources listed above for additional info on secondhand smoke.
- Continue to build your media list.

#### 1 Week Out:

- Contact your local media. You can send out a press release or media advisory notifying reporters of your event (see the media section). Follow-up and call your media contacts a few days before the event to remind them.

#### Day of the Sit-in:

- Get yourself together and go have fun.

#### Once you are there:

##### Step 1: Split into groups of 2-3.

Why? Your goal is to fill up as many tables as you can quickly for 1 hour in the smoking section. If a booth has 4 seats, you only need to take 2 of them. If there are 70 seats and you only have 35 people, each group of two asks for a separate table

##### Step 2: Eat.

During this time relax, and tell your servers about the dangers of secondhand smoke. Be polite - don't get out of hand and try not to disturb the other customers.

##### Step 3: Spread your message.

You are holding this sit-in to convince the restaurant to go smoke-free, so be persuasive! Leave behind a flyer or palm card with your check. You can focus on the dangers of secondhand smoke and use messages like, "I loved my meal, but I'd love it even more in a smoke-free environment," or, "I'd dine here twice as often if it were smoke-free." Show the restaurant what they are missing out on.

**Step 4: Pay the bill!**

Remember, you want to be polite and persuasive. Restaurant owners and staff don't appreciate cheap customers, so make sure you pay your bill, and don't forget to leave a tip!

**Step 5: Go outside, and if there is media use it!**

Play toward the cameras and make your sit-in newsworthy. Use posters, flyers, a group chant or other creative props to attract attention.

**Step 6: Go home.**

You're done - or almost. Write articles and take pictures. Send them to your local paper, school paper, or state program. This can help bring even more attention to your efforts.

**Event Follow-up:**

This event should motivate people to do more to fight tobacco. Here are a few ideas:

- Develop and circulate a petition to show the number of people in support of the restaurant going smoke free for people to sign.
- If there is a coalition working on passing a statewide or local ban on smoking in workplaces, have the details on hand.
- If the restaurant is willing, post information about the sit-in so that people know how to get involved, and leave handouts with additional info.

Interested in more? Check out the rest of your **KBD CR-ROM** and **kickbuttsday.org** to find out more about the fight against tobacco and what youth advocates across the country are doing to take action.