

# Health education unit spearheads city's tobacco-free movement

▶ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"Actually, there's no better role for city government than to protect people," countered Steven Fugaro, former president of the S.F. Medical Society. "Data show that 50% of people in the United States show evidence of [exposure to] secondhand smoke."

And, according to UCSF Professor Stanton Glantz, among the nation's leading experts on tobacco's effects, who spoke later in the hearing, no level of secondhand smoke is safe and it's no respecter of barriers.

"It can diffuse throughout a building, through pipes and heating vents, out windows and up into other windows," he said. Worse, its effects — damage to the cells that line blood vessels, for example — are still obvious 24 hours after exposure. The EPA has classified secondhand smoke as a known cause of cancer in humans, he added.

Ordinance 80438 is in a holding pattern. Except for a provision to ban smoking in taxicabs that was passed separately in December, all the other provisions were put on hold at Daly's request.

"The supervisor was approached last year and agreed to carry the ordinance," says his aide Tom Jackson. "He won't move it forward to the Rules Committee until he's sure it has the support to pass it."

## 'NOT A CIVIL LIBERTY'

The facts about smoking's dangers are undeniable, yet tobacco control remains controversial because it pits nonsmokers' safety against smokers' rights.

products and must renew the license annually for a fee of \$188.

Last year's most newsworthy ban — the first for a major U.S. city — prohibits all 60 stand-alone drugstores in San Francisco from selling cigarettes, cigars, snuff and other tobacco products. Pharmacies located inside of grocery stores and big box stores are exempt.

Coalition members — currently there are 16 — also have implemented dozens of anti-tobacco activities targeted to their neighborhoods and constituents, and coordinated broader actions to expose the tobacco companies' scientific cover-ups and counteract international marketing strategies.

Mission Housing Development Corp. got the Board of Education to ban the sale of food produced by tobacco subsidiaries at public schools. In response to advocacy from the Girls After School Academy, a Sunnydale housing complex began designating certain apartments as smoke-free. The local chapter of the American Lung Association successfully advocated for smoke-free housing at three multiunit complexes. Project RIDE, which encourages car-loving youth to become social advocates, convinced Asian American-sponsored events to reject tobacco sponsorship. And Latino Issues Forum got S.F. State University and City College to divest their tobacco stocks and stop selling cigarettes on campus.

Members of the Tobacco Free Coalition are an eclectic lot. Some, like the local branch of the American Cancer Society, are large, venerable organizations with broad mandates that fold coalition advocacy work into their day-to-day activities. Others are small projects and programs, such as the Sunset Russian Tobacco Education Project, which runs Russian language stop-smoking clinics at a neighborhood health center.

## COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

Coalition members meet quarterly to strategize and confer with staff of the Tobacco Free Project, a health education component of San Francisco's Public Health Department. The project and the coalition were launched in 1990, two years after California voters approved Proposition 99, the Tobacco Tax and Health Promotion Act that raised the tax from 10¢ to 35¢ per tobacco item or pack. Prop. 99 mandated that coalitions be formed to ensure that local government spending of the tax revenue reflects the community's diversity.

Of the tax hike, 5¢ is dedicated to tobacco-prevention activities. The rest goes to tobacco, drug and alcohol prevention in schools; research into tobacco-related diseases; medical services; and mitigation of smoking-related environmental damage, such as fires and litter.

The nickel is stashed in a state Health Education Account — last year, the state collected \$55.6 million — and then is distributed to "local lead agencies," usually public health departments that steer their county's tobacco control efforts. The Tobacco Free Project is the DPH program for San Francisco. For fiscal 2008-09, the project's Prop. 99 revenues were \$551,386.

Financial support for the Tobacco Free Project and similar prevention efforts nationwide got another boost in 1998 when five big tobacco companies signed a Master Settlement Agreement — a slap across the face of the tobacco industry by state attorneys general for covering up smoking's addictiveness and health consequences and for promoting its allure to youth. Of the \$206 billion the companies agreed to pay all 50 states over 25 years, California gets \$25 billion. Funding began in 2000. That year, the Tobacco Free Project started receiving about \$1 million annually to supplement its Prop. 99 revenues.

Much of Tobacco Free Project's budget gets regranted through competitive grants to community organizations, many of them coalition members, to fund their services: educating the public about the dangers of smoking, offering quit-smoking classes, advocating to reduce secondhand smoke, struggling to make tobacco less accessible and appealing to youth, and networking with state, national and international organizations to counter pro-tobacco influences. Some coalition members also get



Members of Youth Leadership Institute's TURF — Tobacco Use Reduction Force — meet in February to plan strategies for their upcoming campaign to limit retailers selling tobacco in the city.

competitive, multiyear grants directly from the state Department of Public Health's Tobacco Control Program.

Together, funded projects have operated in 12 city neighborhoods — Bayview, Chinatown, Excelsior, Hayes Valley, Ingleside, Mission, Potrero Hill, Richmond, South of Market, Sunnydale, Sunset and Tenderloin.

"Project staff do a lot of the research to help guide the coalition," says Alyonik Hrushow, Tobacco Free Project director since its inception, "but we have no vote on policy decisions. We're there to draft position papers and prepare fact sheets, and we put on trainings for members, and provide technical assistance and research. The coalition members themselves are entirely independent of the Public Health Department."

In 1994, the project developed a Community Action Model to help grantees mobilize their constituents, not so much to change individuals but to improve the environmental health of entire neighborhoods or communities. Since then, it has funded 53 organizations to use the model, which is based on successful community organizing theories from around the world.

## ACTION MODEL — IN ACTION

The Community Action Model works, says Alex Tom, co-director of Chinese Progressive Association, a coalition member since the early 1990s. "Last year we used the model for our work on secondhand smoke in Chinatown SROs. We held meetings, recruited a core of six adult and youth advocates, named a peer organizer, and practiced how to make effective presentations to our community."

The advocates began by surveying the tenants of 20 buildings about how other people's smoking affected them.

"These are very cramped spaces in Chinatown buildings," Tom says. "There may be a smoker in the family, and other family members can't get away from the smoke. Bathrooms are shared, and we heard many stories of people just sitting in there smoking. We're worried about the most vulnerable in the community, the children and the old people."

The survey results confirmed that most tenants worried about the effects of secondhand smoke and many felt it affected their health. "That's when we decided to move our advocacy efforts to the citywide secondhand smoke ordinance," Tom adds.

Not all tobacco control efforts are successful, and Chinese Progressive Association has experienced firsthand the disappointment of work that eventually comes to naught. Its first Tobacco Free-funded project, called Chinese Power Against Tobacco, was a fight against billboards that it felt promoted smoking's attractiveness to youth in Chinatown. In 1995, the group broadened its scope and worked with then-Supervisor Angela Alioto to sponsor

an ordinance banning outdoor tobacco advertising citywide. It passed but was shot down a few years later when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that state and local governments couldn't regulate tobacco advertising.

Chinese Progressive Association had better luck with a school district policy to ban students from wearing or carrying anything in school that promotes tobacco. Joe Camel and other tobacco icons were favorites with young people, especially on T-shirts, backpacks and hats that were available cheap or free with coupons. When the Chinese Progressive Association surveyed 1,000 middle and high school students, it found that 22% owned items with promotional advertising. Leland Yee, then a school board member, introduced the policy in 1996 and it was enacted three years later.

Chinese Progressive Association had another big win in 1999 when it was the lead coalition member in the fight to make sure San Francisco got Master Settlement Agreement money for tobacco control.

"There were no strings attached to the Master Settlement Agreement funds," Hrushow explains. "States, cities, counties weren't required to spend the funds on any particular purpose. The coalition advocated for the funds to be allocated to tobacco control in the city, and the city got two allocations — one from a lawsuit that the city filed and the other when the city joined in a state suit."

Chinese Progressive Association members led other Tobacco Free advocates as they spoke at press conferences, testified at hearings and advocated with supervisors to allocate Master Settlement funds for tobacco control. They asked for \$2.5 million a year but in the end got \$1 million.

"Still, looking back over the years, I think the coalition's greatest, most important success was getting that \$1 million" for the resources it brought to the movement's efforts, Hrushow says.

## FIGHTING A GOLIATH

After last July's secondhand smoke hearing, coalition members Carol McGruder and Julie Waters, of Communities Under Siege, which fights Big Tobacco here and abroad, congratulated Hrushow and staff Mele Lau and Susana Hennessey Lavery: "We are 100% sure that our coalition members join with us in saluting you for the infrastructure support that you provide. You are truly 'the glue' that keeps us all together," they wrote.

Hrushow is proud of Tobacco Free Coalition's accomplishments and blunt about its adversaries: "The source of the tobacco epidemic is the tobacco companies. Their product kills. Phillip Morris saw the tobacco control policy work as its biggest challenge and tried to stop us in our tracks. They harassed us at the local level and tried to discredit our work."

According to a chronology of California tobacco politics posted by Glantz on the UCSF digital archives, the tobacco industry spent \$21

million to defeat Prop. 99 and, when the initiative passed in 1988, filed two unsuccessful lawsuits claiming it was unconstitutional. Over the next few years, the industry spent many millions more on lobbying and campaign contributions to mitigate the initiative's effects and eventually got to Gov. Pete Wilson and other elected officials. The result: Up to a third of tobacco health education revenues were diverted to perinatal services for several years.

Legal challenges on both sides further delayed resolution of the fund diversions. The loss of money had health consequences. A chart from the state Department of Health Services shows that the year after funds were slashed from \$140 million to \$60 million, teen smoking jumped from 9% to 11% statewide. In San Francisco, teen smoking rose from 16% in 1991 to 20% in 1995.

Young people here, however, responded to Tobacco Free's anti-smoking education, its efforts to control advertising and its insistence that tobacco sales to youth be monitored more carefully. By 2007, teen smoking in San Francisco had dropped to 8%, down 58% from its high, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Nationwide, however, youth are still smoking at alarming rates — almost 20% in 2007, according to the CDC, and 80% of new smokers are under 18. The industry has been careful to avoid advertising directly to minors, and it doesn't have to: Teens look up to their older peers and want to imitate them, so Big Tobacco goes after legal prey, the 18- to 25-year-olds.

Exposing the tobacco companies' targeting of young adults won McGruder a 2009 Jefferson Award for exceptional public service. Two years ago, she went undercover to nightclubs and tobacco company-sponsored parties where Camel No. 9, a new cigarette fashionably packaged in hot pink and cool teal, was handed out to the young women, along with free manicures, makeup, hairstyling.

"Everything about it was geared to it being sexy and exciting, to get young people hooked," McGruder told CBS Channel 5 news after winning the award.

One provision of the 1998 tobacco Master Settlement Agreement prohibited cigarette giveaways except in adult settings. "It stopped (the tobacco companies) from giving out samples on Market Street, for example, but let them keep the clubs," McGruder explained to The Extra. "San Francisco was the only Bay Area city that hadn't restricted them from doing this and, frankly, most of us were surprised it was still going on."

McGruder's sleuthing prompted her and her colleagues to push through a December 2008 ban on free cigarette giveaways in the city's bars and nightclubs.

## MARSHALING YOUTHS

Another organization trying to stop Big Tobacco's targeting of young people is coalition member Youth Leadership Institute. Founded in 1989, now with programs in San Francisco, Marin, San Mateo and Fresno counties, the institute trains high school and college youth to advocate for social change that affects them directly, including controlling tobacco.

The San Francisco institute's primary tobacco control project is TURF — Tobacco Use Reduction Force — which has an ambitious goal: to cut the number of San Francisco youth and adults who smoke by limiting retailers that sell tobacco. TURF's research shows that the tobacco industry targets young people, especially of color, in low-income neighborhoods, and that where there are more tobacco retailers, more people smoke.

"TURF sees tobacco as a social justice issue — the tobacco companies are manipulating you, taking advantage of you," says Matt Rosen, senior director of youth leadership. Young people can effect change, but that's not an easy sell, he says. "Tobacco, like alcohol and drugs, is not the sexiest issue for youth here in San Francisco. It's the hardest to get young people in the door, and victories are important to them."

Young advocates who do buy into the message that they are being manipulated have another formidable hurdle — convincing their peers, a population that thinks it is invincible,

of the dangers of tobacco.

Rosen praises the efforts of TURF Coordinator Fahad Qurashi to recruit youth and keep them involved. He leads eight TURF advocates, who spend about five hours a week doing research and community mapping, learning leadership skills and planning actions. Qurashi, himself a youth advocate when he was in college, also is Tobacco Free Coalition's co-chair. "Some of these kids are new to the game, but others were part of past campaigns," Qurashi said.

Three, in fact, weathered the disappointment of a campaign that fizzled. Beginning in 2005, the young advocates worked for two years on a tobacco manufacturer's mitigation fee.

"The basic idea," Qurashi said, "was to have the city charge a fee for the harms the

▶ CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

## Tobacco-free highlights

- SINCE it formed in 1990, the Tobacco Free Coalition has encouraged and helped enact these policies and laws regulating tobacco use, sale and presence in San Francisco:
- Banned tobacco advertising (products and company names) on city-owned property (1992)
  - Banned smoking in enclosed workplaces, restaurants, public places and sports stadiums (1994)
  - Banned self-service displays of tobacco products (1996)
  - Banned cigarette vending machines (1997)
  - Divested city Employees' Retirement System of tobacco stocks (1998)
  - Rec and Park Commission banned smoking on city playgrounds (1998)
  - Banned tobacco advertising on taxicabs (1999)
  - Board of Education banned wearing or carrying tobacco promotional items (1999)
  - Retailers must obtain a city permit to sell tobacco products (2003)
  - Banned smoking in unenclosed city parks, squares, gardens (2005)
  - Rec and Park Commission banned tobacco company sponsorship of youth sport leagues (2005)
  - Banned smoking at public golf courses (2006)
  - Banned smoking at public transit stops and shelters (2006)
  - Banned tobacco sales on all city property, except the airport (2008)
  - Banned distribution of free tobacco and tobacco accessories in places open to the public, including bars and nightclubs (2008)
  - Banned smoking in taxis (2008)
  - Banned tobacco sales in pharmacies (2008) ■

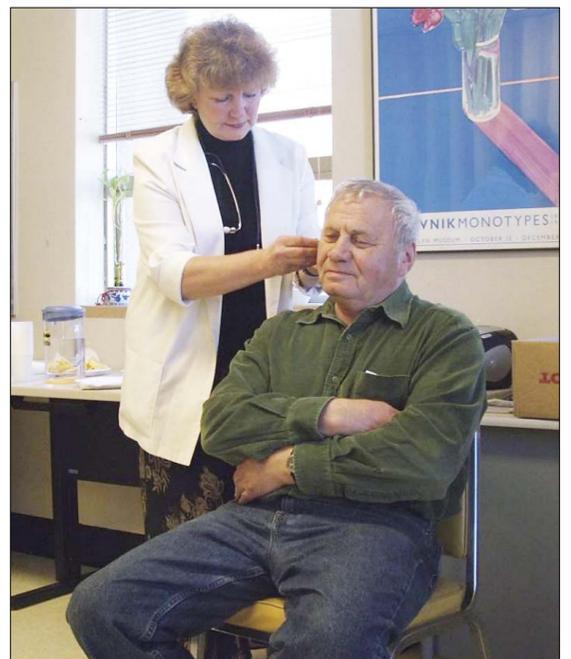


**Youth advocate** from Tobacco Free Project grantee Thad Brown Boys Academy urges passage of an ordinance banning smoking at transit stops. The ordinance, authored by then-Supervisor Fiona Ma, left, passed in 2006.

Karen Licavoli, a vice president of Breathe California, which works to mitigate the effects of lung disease, came down hard on the side of protection at the hearing.

"Smoking is not a civil liberty," she said. Breathe California is a member of the city's Tobacco Free Coalition, a group of organizations that, since 1990, has spearheaded 17 public policy changes to control tobacco use in San Francisco (see sidebar). The proposed secondhand smoke ordinance is the most sweeping.

Lighting up is now prohibited in playgrounds, city parks and gardens, at bus stops and golf courses. No one can use any tobacco product at a Rec and Park athletic field, and tobacco companies are banned from sponsoring youth sports leagues. Tobacco products can't be given away, and they can't be sold in vending machines or displayed on self-service racks or shelves and where minors are permitted. Businesses need a permit to sell tobacco



**Boris**, a smoker for 48 years who survived four heart attacks, gets acupuncture to help him quit at the Sunset Russian Tobacco Education Project, a Tobacco Free Project grantee.