SmokeFreeColorado
Good health is good business

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Research Shows Colorado Restaurant and Bar Sales May Increase After Smoke-Free Law Goes Into Effect

Studies Also Find Disparity in Restaurant and Bar Owners' Perceptions of Smoking Rates

DENVER – Colorado consumers say they will increase their visits to restaurants and bars once these establishments become smoke-free, according to new research about the Colorado Clean Indoor Air Act, which goes into effect July 1. A similar survey found that restaurant and bar owners and managers believe that far more Coloradoans smoke than actually do.

In April 2006, research was conducted to understand perceptions about smoking as well as how restaurant and bar managers and owners, as well as residents, are feeling about the state's impending smoke-free law. The law requires most public indoor areas and entryways leading into buildings to be smoke-free, which will create a healthier environment for Coloradoans. Essentially, bars, restaurants, gaming halls, most work places and other indoor public areas will become smoke-free.

The restaurant and bar survey included telephone interviews with 258 restaurant and bar owners and managers throughout Colorado. For the consumer study, 600 Colorado residents were surveyed.

The consumer study found that one-third (32 percent) of Colorado residents say they'll eat out at restaurants more often once the smoke-free law takes effect. Nearly one-fourth (23 percent) say they plan to frequent bars more often, and 22 percent are more likely to go bowling once these establishments are smoke-free.

Interestingly, bar and restaurant owners and managers believe the opposite will be the case. When asked how the smoke-free law will impact their restaurant and/or bar, 58 percent said they expect their business will decrease as a result, while 28 percent felt it will stay the same. Only 13 percent anticipate new customers and increased business.

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Data has shown that states with smoke-free laws have seen positive economic outcomes. A Zagat Survey for New York restaurants showed that nearly a quarter of respondents dined out more often after the state's smoke-free law went into effect in June 2003. In California, restaurant and bar receipts have increased every year since its smoke- free law was enacted in 1997.

Communities around Colorado that already have smoke-free ordinances have shown that consumers tend to go out more. For example, sales tax revenue from dining and drinking establishments in Fort Collins was more than 5 percent higher a year after the city's smoke-free ordinance went into effect.

"States with smoke-free laws have seen a positive economic impact on local restaurants and bars, in addition to creating cleaner air for residents and workers," said Chris Sherwin, executive director of the Colorado Tobacco Education and Prevention Alliance. "The vast majority of Coloradoans who don't smoke represent a huge untapped market for local business owners."

The research also found that restaurant and bar owners and managers overestimate the percentage of Colorado adults who smoke. Half (47 percent) of the bar and restaurant owners and managers surveyed believe that between 35 percent and 74 percent of adult Coloradoans smoke. In reality, only 18 percent of Colorado adults smoke.

The consumer survey showed that 91 percent of Coloradoans had heard of the Colorado Clean Indoor Air Act, with 71 percent agreeing that the law is good for Colorado. Forty percent of residents who think the law is good for the state are smokers.

Two-thirds (67 percent) of smokers in Colorado aged 25 to 34 said they intend to smoke less once the smoke-free law goes into effect. A third (35 percent) of smokers in that same age group said they would be more likely to quit smoking once the state becomes smoke-free.

In Colorado, tobacco is the leading cause of preventable death. Surveys of Colorado smokers have found that 85 percent of them want to quit. The Colorado Quitline, 800-639-QUIT, is a free telephone coaching service that supports smokers through the quitting process and

offers up to eight free weeks of the patch. Telephone coaching with the patch shows a 40-42 percent success rate, versus only 3 percent for Colorado smokers quitting on their own.

Smoke-Free Colorado is a statewide coalition of health and community organizations including American Heart Association, American Lung Association, American Cancer Society, GASP of Colorado (Group to Alleviate Smoking Pollution), Colorado Tobacco Education and Prevention Alliance and the State Tobacco Education and Prevention Partnership. Together, Smoke-Free Colorado is working to educate the public about the state's smoke-free law that goes into effect July 1, 2006.

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