

Press Releases

01-12-11 Exec and Health Commissioner Announce Reality Check Program to Assist Village of Walden

EXEC AND HEALTH COMMISSIONER ANNOUNCE REALITY CHECK PROGRAM TO ASSIST VILLAGE OF WALDEN IN SMOKE FREE PARKS INITIATIVE

A breath of fresh air will soon be getting a little fresher for park visitors in the Village of Walden. On Tuesday, January 11, the Village of Walden's board members approved a new law to make all of its village parks smoke free. Brian Maher, mayor of Walden, collaborated with Orange County Department of Health's Reality Check program to draft an action plan to pave the way for Walden's parks to become smoke free in 2011.

Reality Check is part of New York State's Tobacco Control Program. Smoke free outdoors has been an ongoing initiative of the New York State Department of Health Tobacco Control Program and Orange County's Healthy Orange program. The Orange County Department of Health collaborated with Orange County Parks and Recreation to create a County smoke free playgrounds resolution in 2009.

"The law was drafted to fit the needs of the Village of Walden," stated Mayor Brian Maher. "This is a great example of county and state officials working together to support the efforts of local municipalities". All seven of Walden's parks, including the little league fields and local swimming areas will now be smoke free zones. Residents found smoking in these areas will be issued a fine. Fines will be imposed at the discretion of a Walden village judge.

The initiative is focused on reducing community members' exposure to second-hand smoke. Dr. Jean Hudson, Orange County Commissioner of Health explained, "There are more than 4,000 chemicals contained in second-hand smoke that cause cancer. The effects of second-hand smoke are scientifically proven and accepted. Reducing smoking where children play sends a positive message to our community," added Dr. Hudson.

The initiative will also help reduce the amount of litter in parks. Not only is cigarette butt litter unsightly, clean up can be costly. "Smoke free parks initiatives protect our children and our environment from second-hand smoke and cigarette litter," stated Edward A. Diana, Orange County Executive. He also stated that "Orange County residents have the right to protect their health and the health of their families."

"I commend the Village of Walden for taking the initiative in passing this local law," stated Senator Larkin. "This will significantly reduce second-hand smoke and is a wonderful addition to the Orange County Department of Health's Healthy Orange program." Walden Mayor, Brian Maher also stated that he is impressed with the level of support from the Orange County Department of Health and is pleased with the collaboration to better our communities and promote public health in Orange County.

For more information on Healthy Orange and the Reality Check Program, please contact the Department of Health at 845-568-5237. For more information on Walden's smoke free parks initiative, please call Village of Walden Mayor Brian Maher at 845-667-2949.