



School is In – Smoking is Out

Mississippi high school student Michael Henderson appreciates the fact that he can go to school and not feel pressure from his classmates to use tobacco products.

"I am 100 percent behind the 'no tobacco products on school campuses' rule because there is less chance of peer pressure," said Henderson. School is about learning, and students shouldn't have to worry about being pressured to try tobacco products while they are at school."

It's been 10 years since legislation went into effect in Mississippi prohibiting students from possessing any type of tobacco products and adults from using tobacco products on educational property.

"Three thousand and seven hundred Mississippi kids become new daily smokers each year and 69,000 Mississippi kids currently under the age of 18 will die prematurely from smoking," said Roy Hart, director of the Office of Tobacco Control at the Mississippi State Department of Health. "This policy is one way we can help protect kids from experiencing pressure to begin using tobacco products."

"This legislation has been a great thing for Mississippi students because not only does it alleviate some of the peer pressure they experience from their classmates to try tobacco products, it also limits some of their exposure to secondhand smoke," said **Leigh Luby**, director of the Tobacco-Free Coalition of Attala, Leake and Winston County. "Each year in Mississippi, smoking accounts for an estimated 5,250 premature deaths, including 550 deaths among nonsmokers as a result of secondhand smoke."

Henderson hopes to eventually see a policy in place that would protect all Mississippians from exposure to secondhand smoke. "If you are out somewhere and people around you are smoking, it can cause harm to you. I think everyone should be able to go to public places and be protected from secondhand smoke."

For more information on the dangers of tobacco use and secondhand smoke, contact the Tobacco-Free Coalition of **Attala, Leake and Winston** County at 877-826-8631 or visit www.tobaccofreems.org.