

GENERATION OF THE CHILD: Keeping our children tobacco free

By Jill C. Urie

Generation of the Child

Last year, Governor Kempthorne declared this the "Generation of the Child." In his, April 30, 2002 proclamation the Governor reaffirmed that "the children of Idaho are our most precious natural resource." One way to protect this precious resource is to ensure that the children of Idaho remain healthy and well-educated.

Keeping our children tobacco free is one of the most important ways to ensure their health and happiness. As tobacco vendors, you should know that the health risks associated with tobacco and smoking are well documented.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention has estimated that 3000 young people under the age of 18 become regular smokers every day – ultimately resulting in severe health consequences. Many diseases like blackened lungs, lung cancer, emphysema, mouth and throat cancer, and hardening of the arteries have been discovered in smokers who have died. In addition, smoking begins a pre-mature aging process that destroys the body not just internally, but externally. Smokers suffer from chronic coughing, yellowing of the teeth and nails, bad "ashtray" breath, and smelly hair, body and clothes.

Continue on page 2

What's in Tobacco Smoke Anyway?

Tobacco smoke contains about 4,000 chemicals, 53 of which are known cancer-causing agents. Here are some familiar chemicals found in tobacco smoke:



- **Acetone** (nail polish and paint remover)
- **Ammonia** (cleaner for floors/toilets)
- **Arsenic** (rat poison)
- **Butane** (cigarette lighter fluid)
- **Carbon Monoxide** (car exhaust fumes)
- **DDT/Dieldrin** (pesticides)
- **Formaldehyde** (preserves body tissue)
- **Hydrogen Cyanide** (gas chamber poison)
- **Methane** (swamp gas)
- **Napthalene** (mothballs)
- **Nicotine** (insecticide and addictive drug)
- **Toluene** (industrial solvent)
- **Vinyl Chloride** (used to make PVC piping)

Generation of the Child continued

Perhaps most disturbing is that tobacco is considered a “gateway” drug. Meaning that the teens who smoke are more likely to drink heavily and use other drugs. The National Institute of Drug and Alcohol indicates that illegal drug use is rare among those who have never smoked, and that tobacco use is likely to come before the use of alcohol or illegal drugs.

This arsenal of knowledge about the health risks of tobacco use should strengthen your resolve to prevent tobacco sales to minors. Eighty percent of adult smokers started smoking before they were 18. If we can keep our children from using tobacco then the likelihood that they will start smoking at all is greatly reduced.

You are a child’s main source of tobacco, and as such, you are in the position of either illegally providing tobacco to minors or refusing to sell to minors. Your dedication to the law and to the health and safety of the children of Idaho will make all the difference.

By preventing the sale of tobacco to minors, you will not only be following the law, but you can save that child from a life of addiction and disease. This is a great responsibility.

Keeping our children healthy and well-educated about the dangers of tobacco use is one of the greatest gifts we can give future generations. Remember that during this “Generation of the Child” you play an active role in the health, happiness and success of Idaho’s children.

Factoids and Statistics

“B” Average for February

According to Idaho Code 39-5701 the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare must inspect each business that sells tobacco to ensure that it does not sell tobacco to minors. For February of 2003:

- ◆ 61 Vendors were inspected. *
- ◆ 9 Vendors sold to the inspecting minor.
- ◆ The compliance rate for the month of February 2003 was 85.25%.

*Inspections where purchase attempts were made.

Prevent the Sale Website

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- ◆ Generation of the Child
- ◆ Prevent The Sale Web Site

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