

JULY 2008 - JEL uses 500 pairs of empty shoes to make a statement

West Delaware and Ed-Co JEL (Just Eliminate Lies) know that the statistics about secondhand smoke are just that to some people: statistics. So they decided to set up a display at the Delaware County Fair to show just how shocking some of those statistics are. Every year 500 Iowans die from causes related to secondhand smoke. That may not seem like much, but looking out at 500 empty pairs of shoes was a surprise to most people who came over to view their display. “These shoes are empty because this many people have died this year” said West Delaware JEL president Alisa Holverson to some teens who walked among the rows and rows of shoes.

The week before the fair, JEL youth delivered balloons and certificates to Manchester area restaurants to celebrate them becoming smoke free as of July 1. Some restaurants and bars have been concerned about loss of business after the smoke free law goes into effect. Jones says she has spoken with many community members who say they are more likely now to go out to eat with their families at places they had previously avoided because they were too smoky.

This new law will protect many Iowans, those who patronize places that are now smoke free and those who work there. During a shift in a smoke-filled restaurant or bar, workers have the same exposure as if they had smoked 1 to 2 packs of cigarettes. We also know that restaurant and bar workers are at least 50% more likely to die of lung cancer than workers in other occupations.

In recognition of the new Iowa Smokefree Air Act, these youth wanted to remind people of why smoke free air is so important. “Secondhand smoke causes a variety of health problems from lung cancer and asthma to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome,” said Clare Jones, JEL Advisor and Prevention Supervisor for Helping Services for Northeast Iowa. “We want people to realize just how dangerous it is and to help people who are interested in quitting smoking get connected with resources.” Jones says those free resources include calling Quitline Iowa at 1-800-Quit-Now.

