

A community where all can achieve optimal health.



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PRESS RELEASE

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Johnson County Public Health Congratulates the City of North Liberty for Making Parks and Trails Tobacco/Nicotine Free

Johnson County Public Health wishes to recognize the City of North Liberty for its commitment to creating a healthier environment for all North Liberty residents and visitors. The City Council voted to make all city owned or operated park and trail grounds tobacco and nicotine free as of April 12, 2022. The ordinance states using any form of tobacco or vaping product in city parks or trails is not allowed at any time.

City Council members adopted this policy to protect the health of those community members who visit the parks to enjoy fresh air, play, relax, and exercise. Exposure to secondhand smoke, electronic cigarette aerosol, and tobacco product litter reduces the enjoyment of these spaces. Secondhand cigarette smoke harms everyone and there is no safe level or exposure to secondhand smoke, even in outdoor environments. "Each year, our parks, trails, ponds and ballfields are visited — and enjoyed — by thousands of people looking to get outside, appreciate nature, play and enjoy clean air and sunshine," said Parks Director Guy Goldsmith. "Tobacco- and nicotine-free spaces means less trash, cleaner air and more enjoyment."

In Iowa, 5,100 adults die each year from their own smoking, and \$1.3 billion in annual healthcare costs in Iowa are directly caused by smoking. In 2019, 22.7% of Iowa high school youth reported currently using any tobacco product, including e-cigarettes. Among Iowa high school youth, 6.7% reported currently smoking cigarettes. Tobacco/nicotine-free policies provide the opportunity to change community norms around tobacco and vaping use and help to reduce youth use.

Johnson County Public Health also thanks Boy Scouts of America Troop 270 for their dedication to this effort. Members cleaned up cigarette butts and other litter at Penn Meadows Park and educated the North Liberty Parks and Recreation Commission and City Council about the importance of tobacco/nicotine-free policies.

Johnson County Public Health will assist the City of North Liberty in communicating about the new tobacco/nicotine-free policy to increase community awareness of the new ordinance and provide free signage. "We are pleased to add North Liberty to the growing list of Iowa communities with tobacco/nicotine-free park policies," said Susan Vileta, Health Educator, JCPH. Currently, 700 parks in Iowa prohibit tobacco use.

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