

Air quality improves since ban

Pollution down in bars, restaurants, report finds

By JACOB MILLER
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Marshfield bars and restaurants have seen a 95 percent decline in air pollution since the implementation of a **smoke-free** ordinance, according to a Wood County Health Department report.

"I don't think the findings were a surprise to us," said DaNita Carlson, Tobacco Prevention Specialist for the Wood County Health Department. "We know secondhand smoke kills, and we know how hazardous it is to people's health. As we were looking at this and had seen how the bars had ranked initially, it wasn't a surprise."

Air quality was measured in four Marshfield bars April 11, prior to the ordinance, and again on Nov. 28, more than seven months after all establishments in Marshfield city limits were required to be **smoke free**.

Hazardous fine particulate, or air pollution caused from **cigarette** smoke, decreased dramatically, the report said. Prior to the ordinance, air quality was "hazardous to health," the highest level of air quality danger, according to the

Environmental Protection Agency. The follow-up tests showed a "good" rating, which indicates no health concerns for employees or patrons.

Tom Gilbertson, owner of Mr. G's Saloon, 136 S. Central Ave., said no matter what the report says, it's not going to help draw people into the bar. He said former customers go to bars on the outskirts of city limits where they can smoke.

"It's good for me I guess because I don't smoke," Gilbertson said, "but not for our business."

Tobacco Free Coalition of Wood County volunteers performed the test, measuring air quality in bars without providing advance notification to owners or management, Carlson said.

Currently, 37 Wisconsin communities are **smoke free**, but only 10 do not allow smoking in restaurants or bars, according to **Smoke Free** Wisconsin.

"We will pass the information on to other communities who are looking at **smoke-free** air policy, and on to area legislators," Carlson said.

Dr. Doug Reding, an oncologist/hematologist and vice president of Marshfield Clinic, said the short-term benefits are most likely that fewer people will be at the hospital for heart and chest pain problems, and in the long-term, deaths related to secondhand smoke could be reduced.