



For Immediate Release

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Clean Air for Queer Families: PrideFest Milwaukee Creates Smoke-Free Spaces

The City of Milwaukee Tobacco-Free Alliance applauds PrideFest Milwaukee's inclusion of three nonsmoking areas on the festival grounds. Designated nonsmoking areas include the Exercising Pride: PrideFest Health and Wellness section, the Youth Area, and the Children and Family Stage. Festival organizers also request that attendees refrain from smoking in the new PrideFit area (featuring yoga, dance, and movement) and in the History and Stonewall tents.

As the demographics of the LGBTQ community change, family friendly spaces are increasingly in demand. At just 6 years old, Jasper Murray-Bentz and his two moms like to attend PrideFest, but he's not so happy about all the smoking that comes with it - "I didn't like the smell of it and I didn't like being around it," he says of his Pride experience last year. Luckily this year parts of the festival will be smoke-free.

"The LGBTQ community smokes at roughly twice the rate of the general public due to a variety of factors including bar culture, coping with discrimination, and industry targeting, so we're glad that PrideFest Milwaukee is showing support for families with small children and those trying to quit smoking by creating smoke-free spaces," said Anneke Mohr, City of Milwaukee Tobacco-Free Alliance coordinator. "The LGBTQ community values diversity and inclusion, and the smoke-free spaces show that everyone, especially those trying to quit and families, is welcome at PrideFest Milwaukee."

PrideFest Milwaukee's accommodation of nonsmoking attendees and families is part of a nationwide trend. Pride fests in Atlanta, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, California, Idaho, and Alaska have gone totally smoke-free. In Wisconsin, the Duluth/Superior and La Crosse Pride fests are 100% smoke-free, and the Outreach Pride Parade/Rally in Madison will create smoke-free spaces and formalize a tobacco-free sponsorship policy starting this year. While PrideFest Milwaukee still allows smoking in most areas, the City of Milwaukee Tobacco-Free Alliance encourages the local festival as well as other summer festivals to expand their smoke-free spaces in the future. "We want to be in an environment that's clean and fun to be in. And the smoke is certainly a deterrent," says one of Jasper's moms.

The Alliance, which will have a table in the Health and Wellness section, has produced videos about the pervasiveness of tobacco and its harm to the LGBTQ community as part of their Tobacco-Free Pride initiative. The videos will be released on social media during the festival and feature local entertainers, athletes, and families.

"We want to remind the LGBTQ community that you can be yourself, have fun, and be smoke-free," Mohr said. "We also ask those who have been impacted by tobacco to share their stories with us through the Tobacco-Free Pride initiative."

The City of Milwaukee Tobacco-Free Alliance, led by the Community Advocates Public Policy Institute, brings together community organizations that support a tobacco-free Milwaukee. In addition to raising awareness about tobacco use in the LGBTQ community, the Alliance works with youth on Wisconsin Wins to conduct compliance checks at neighborhood retailers, with youth peer educators through FACT, and with landlords to address the benefits of smoke-free housing through Clear Gains. To learn more about the City of Milwaukee Tobacco-Free Alliance, go to www.facebook.com/CityofMilwaukeeTobaccoFreeAlliance.

To learn more about the City of Milwaukee Tobacco-Free Alliance's Tobacco-Free Pride initiative, contact Anneke Mohr at amohr@communityadvocates.net or 414-270-2948.

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