



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

RSA Tower 201 Monroe Street, Suite 914 Montgomery, AL 36104
Phone 334-206-5300 Fax 334-206-5534

www.adph.org

Restaurant owners report smoke-free restaurant and bar policies don't harm business

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Diane Beeson or Julie Hare
(334) 206-3830

Smoke-free policies in restaurants and bars don't harm business and are good for health, according to a new video released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Foundation. The video features restaurant and bar owners in Alabama talking about their experiences operating under local smoke-free laws. They report that far from suffering a decline in customers, their business is as good as ever since their communities went smoke-free.

Featured in the video are the owners of the Original Oyster House in Spanish Fort, Whispering Oaks in Opelika, and Cosmos Restaurant and Bar in Orange Beach. Despite initial reservations among some, all three have come to appreciate the economic and health benefits of being smoke-free.

"Everybody's on the same level playing field," said Carlton Clifton, of Whispering Oaks. "Going smoke-free helped our business," said Mary Lou Roszkowski at the Original Oyster House. "It's easier to seat parties, less turnover time, and less cleaning."

Alabama is one of nine states featured in the video campaign. Other states include Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas and West Virginia. These states were chosen because almost all have high rates of smoking and smoking-related disease; they lack substantial statewide smoking restrictions; and they have a number of communities with strong local smoke-free laws.

The campaign includes state-specific videos featuring local restaurant and bar owners talking about their experiences operating under smoke-free laws. The second part of the campaign includes an economic impact study of Alabama restaurants and bars with smoke-free policies. The study is targeted for release later this year.

"I'm not surprised to hear that these owners had positive experiences with smoke-free laws," said Ginny Campbell, chair of the Coalition for a Tobacco Free Alabama. "It only makes sense considering that the vast majority of people in Alabama—75 percent—are nonsmokers. Even many smokers prefer to dine in smoke-free restaurants."

Less than 25 percent of adult Alabamians are tobacco users. In 2011, 93 percent of those surveyed in Alabama's Adult Tobacco Survey said breathing secondhand smoke was harmful to one's health.

Secondhand smoke—the combination of smoke from the burning end of a cigarette and the smoke breathed out by smokers—contains more than 7,000 chemicals, including at least 69 chemicals that cause cancer. As little as 30 minutes of exposure can cause a heart attack.

Smoke-free policies in bars and restaurants protect the health of employees and patrons. Besides driving away potential customers, allowing smoking has hidden financial costs, including higher cleaning and maintenance costs and increased sick days among employees.

Forty-five communities in Alabama have passed laws making workplaces smoke-free.

All the videos may be viewed at www.youtube.com/smokefreebusiness. More information about secondhand smoke is available at www.tobaccofreealabama.net.