

# @ Health & Well-Being ISSUE

a publication of the rapides foundation spring 2008

FOCUS: TOBACCO PREVENTION AND CONTROL INITIATIVE

Get Healthy  
**CENLA**



**Challenge is large, payoff larger** After years of planning, The Rapides Foundation launched its *Get Healthy Cenla* Initiative with a two-day kickoff on Jan. 9-10. With that came a challenge to the community to get involved.

"Our goal is simple: to help people get healthier," announced Joe Rosier, president and CEO of The Rapides Foundation. "But we can't do it without you."

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## Tobacco Initiative Kickoff



Joe Rosier, The Rapides Foundation President and CEO, delivers opening remarks at the *Get Healthy Central Louisiana* kickoff.

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Rosier told the audience at the Coughlin-Saunders Performing Arts Center, "The Rapides Foundation's Board of Trustees had deliberate and in-depth discussions about how best to improve the health status of Central Louisiana residents before they need medical treatment. Our new Healthy Behaviors Initiative will focus on the issues of tobacco addiction, poor diet and inactivity. They rank as the leading causes of preventable death in the United States."

The Foundation's first Initiative is Tobacco Prevention and Control, which has two main goals for Central Louisiana: for adult tobacco users to quit and for youths to never start. Statistics show the need.

# Statistics from the Community Health Assessment

## 25% smoke

Nearly 25 percent of adults in The Rapides Foundation Service Area smoke cigarettes either every day or some days which is higher than the state (23.5 percent) and United States (22.2 percent) averages

Smoking prevalence as high as 34.5 percent in Grant Parish

To combat those high numbers effectively, the Foundation sought advice from the U. S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Tobacco Technical Assistance Consortium as well as groups and agencies in Louisiana. From there, a plan was developed with three components, the first being community development and mobilization. The Foundation is already working to partner with organizations and coalitions through grant opportunities (see page 8).

The second component is a marketing campaign to counter the \$250 million the tobacco industry spends yearly in Louisiana to attract new smokers and keep current smokers addicted. It will involve media campaigns, special events and promotions.

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# The Foundation's 2005 11th Assessment, showed:

## 2x higher

Seven of the nine parishes in the service area have smokeless tobacco rates that are at least two times higher than the national average of 4.5 percent

## 19.3%

Smokeless tobacco rate in the entire service area is 8.5 percent with rates as high as 19.3 percent in Catahoula Parish



Here, Rosier showed a sneak peek of the counter marketing campaign featuring Rick Stoddard, who lost his wife to cancer at an early age (see page 10). The culprit was smoking.

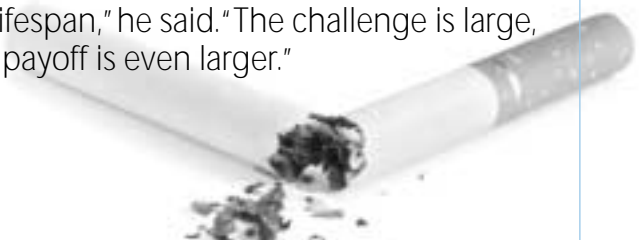
The third component of the Initiative is devoted to healthcare and other provider cessation programs. The pilot of this program will launch in late 2008 and will involve getting more doctors to tell their patients to stop using tobacco and to give advice on how to do it.

The Rapides Foundation is taking a proactive approach with **Get Healthy Cenla**. Whether it is working with area schools to reach teens, supporting local ordinances that mirror Louisiana's smoke-free air legislation or working to increase the excise tax on tobacco products, the Foundation will be front and center in the fight

to end the use of tobacco products in Central Louisiana.

Rosier acknowledged that **Get Healthy Cenla** has a daunting mission, but it is ready for the task. Based on research by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, strategies to help people quit smoking can yield significant health and economic benefits.

"A healthier Central Louisiana will help bring down hospital costs, healthcare and insurance rates and can result in less on-the-job absenteeism, fewer visits to the doctor and a longer lifespan," he said. "The challenge is large, but the payoff is even larger."



## Tobacco Wars



Patrick Reynolds is the grandson of R. J. Reynolds, founder of the tobacco giant that produces Camels, Salems and other popular tobacco brands.

### 'I Make a Difference'

**A**t age 15, Patrick Reynolds lost his father to emphysema. It was the single most significant event that shaped the man he was to become.

His grandfather was R.J. Reynolds, founder of the company known for producing Camels, Salems and other popular cigarette brands. Patrick was just a boy when his father, R.J. Jr., inherited the company. Because his parents were divorced, Patrick rarely saw his dad. What memories he did have were of a man in poor

health, struggling to breathe. His father was a heavy smoker, addicted to cigarettes.

"He was dying from the product which made the family fortune," Patrick Reynolds laments almost 45 years after his father's death.

But his demons followed him over the years. "I saw a counselor, and along the way I discovered I had some anger toward my father for not being around. I had some sadness – deep grief and sadness – about his absence in my life. I realized that smoking is what took him away."

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**Tobacco is as addicting as heroin. You'll try to quit and fail for an average of 17 years, and every year they have you as a customer – once you're hooked – you'll be spending about \$1,200 of your precious earned money on smoking and tobacco.**

Patrick Reynolds



After losing yet another family member to tobacco, Reynolds decided to turn his back on the family business “and walk away.”

Reynolds eventually found himself in Washington, D.C., and ran into a U.S. senator he knew. When Reynolds casually remarked that cigarette taxes should be higher, the senator asked him to testify at a senate subcommittee hearing. Reynolds said he thought at the time, “What an interesting idea. I can make a difference on this issue and channel some of this anger and sadness I have about my dad not being around.”

Reynolds first testified in 1986 and instantly received national media coverage. “That opened the door for me. I was cast in the spotlight and into a position of leadership.” And it’s been non-stop ever since. He has worked on such issues as banning smoking on airplanes and raising tobacco taxes. “The more I worked on campaigns, the more I saw who the enemy was, what their marketing tactics were, the angrier I got about big tobacco.”

His mission wasn’t always easy, considering he was telling his family’s secrets to the world. In fact, most of his relatives still won’t speak to him.

In order to focus his efforts, he started the Foundation for a Smoke Free America, a nonprofit group whose mission is to motivate youths to stay tobacco-free and to empower smokers to quit for good. He brings his message of a tobacco-free society to audiences across the country.

He brought that message to Central Louisiana as part of The Rapides Foundation’s kickoff of its

new **Get Healthy Cenla** Initiative, which includes a Tobacco Prevention and Control component. “We wanted someone of stature and expertise in tobacco control to kick off our major new health initiative, and Patrick Reynolds was that person,” said Joe Rosier, President and CEO of The Rapides Foundation. “He has been at the forefront of the smoking issue for almost 20 years and has consistently stood up to the tobacco industry.”

Reynolds spoke to groups both days of the **Get Healthy Cenla** kickoff. He first spoke to a crowd at the Coughlin-Saunders Performing Arts Center in downtown Alexandria. The following morning he addressed more than 1,200 Central Louisiana high school students. “I think young people have no idea how addicting tobacco is, and if The Rapides Foundation can send them a message about that, then it is doing its job,” he said. “If it can help the people in the parishes here to quit smoking, then The Rapides Foundation is doing a wonderful thing for the parishes it serves.”

His speech emphasized the tobacco companies’ clever marketing ploys. He informed his audiences that the tobacco industry spends \$13.4 billion each year on marketing in the United States, mostly to attract young, new smokers. “How do you feel about the fact that the tobacco companies have gone after you, and once they get you as customers, you can’t quit?” he asked the teens.

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## Tobacco Wars

### 'I Make a Difference'

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Reynolds knows firsthand the agony of quitting smoking. He admits to being a smoker for 17 years and attempting to quit at least 11 times before being successful.

"Tobacco is as addicting as heroin. You'll try to quit and fail for an average of 17 years, and every year they have you as a customer – once you're hooked – you'll be spending about \$1,200

of your precious earned money on smoking and tobacco. That's more than \$20,000. How do you feel about that? Do you really want to start?"

Reynolds ended with a promise: "The smoke-free society is coming one day because of you." And certainly because of Patrick Reynolds, who has devoted over two decades of his life to the fight against tobacco. "I make a difference doing this work, and I'll do it for the rest of my life."



Patrick Reynolds delivers straight talk at a high school student rally about the deceptive tactics the tobacco industry uses to hook young people on tobacco.

## Tobacco Prevention and Control: Youth Component



**Defy**  
DEFYTHELIES.COM

### YOUTHS ASKED TO 'DEFY' THE INDUSTRY

**T**he question was simple. "How many of you know someone who uses tobacco?" The answer was sadly predictable. Everyone.

More than 1,200 teenagers from nine Central Louisiana parishes attended an invitation-only rally sponsored by The Rapides Foundation. The event included straight talk from Patrick Reynolds, a man who knows a thing or two about the deceptive tactics the tobacco industry uses.

Grandson of tobacco-company founder R.J. Reynolds, Reynolds asked teens questions to gauge their personal experience with tobacco. Not only did they know somebody who had used tobacco, hundreds said they had done it, too.

Youth is a major focus of the Tobacco Prevention and Control Initiative. "We know that 90 percent of smokers start before the age of 18," said Tammy Moreau, a Program Officer at The Rapides Foundation.

"One way to stop this alarming trend is to get teenagers active in defying the tobacco industry."

Because of this, The Rapides Foundation joined forces with *Defy*, a statewide, youth-led

movement against tobacco industry manipulation. *Defy* is a program of the Louisiana Campaign for Tobacco-Free Living and the Louisiana Tobacco Control Program. The Rapides Foundation joined forces with these organizations to bring attention to *Defy*.

Clayton Shelvin is one of the program coordinators for *Defy*. He believes teaming with The Rapides Foundation is logical and productive. "We joined with The Rapides Foundation because we realized that we were doing pretty much the same thing. How great would it be if we could combine our knowledge and resources to really make an impact on this region?"

The youth kickoff gave *Defy* the opportunity to recruit students as new "street team" members. These new members attended a training session in mid-March. In May they will visit the Louisiana Legislature.

The January rally was the first of many that the Foundation will sponsor to reach teens. The Foundation also will offer grants to Central Louisiana junior high and high schools to raise awareness of the Louisiana Smoke-Free Air Act on their campuses.

**"We know that 90 percent of smokers start before the age of 18."**

Tammy Moreau,  
The Rapides Foundation's Program Officer

## Tobacco Prevention and Control: Community Forums

# Getting Together To Go



Tammy Moreau, a Program Officer for The Rapides Foundation, answers questions from Terri Gremillion at a Tobacco Prevention and Control Initiative Community Forum held in Bunkie.



# Tobacco-Free

**L**ess than a week after the launch of The Rapides Foundation's Tobacco Prevention and Control Initiative, Tammy Moreau, the Initiative's program officer, began conducting a month-long series of 13 Community Forums throughout the nine parishes in the Foundation's service area.

"Involving community groups is vital to the Initiative's success," said Moreau. "The Foundation has allocated a substantial portion of our Initiative budget to fund community-based tobacco control efforts. They're that important."

Carmen Ashley is a senior manager of training and program support for the Tobacco Technical Assistance Consortium at Emory University in Atlanta. Her organization has worked with cities and regions across the United States to help develop strategic plans of action, and she is involved with the Foundation's Tobacco Prevention and Control Initiative. "Grassroots involvement is essential to this initiative because it needs to be owned by the community, by everybody," Ashley said. "Tobacco is ultimately everybody's business. It doesn't matter if you're a student, if you're a teacher, if you're a business person, if you're a parent, a volunteer in the community, a smoker or non-smoker. Everybody has a stake in the health of their neighbors and friends."

Moreau said the Foundation is trying to reach as many groups as it can to tell them about the Initiative and to let them know that the Foundation is offering partnership grants to support local community-based efforts. "These grants will be awarded to nonprofit organizations, groups and community coalitions that would

like to enhance or strengthen their existing tobacco prevention and control activities or want to add tobacco prevention and control to their scope of work," she said.

After the forums, those groups interested in seeking one of the Foundation's partnership grants attended one of two mandatory workshops held in February that explained the grant requirements and procedures. Application deadline was set for April 4.

"There is such potential for change in our communities if we band together and form an effective coalition to decrease the use of tobacco products in Central Louisiana," said Moreau. "We've only just started, but I think we've got a good thing going here which can really make a difference."

Ashley agreed. "Just take baby steps at first. What you'll find is that it just seems to snowball into its own movement. Before you know it, you have different segments of the community working together with you on your initiative."

Which is exactly what the Foundation wants to see happen. Working together today can lead the way to a tobacco-free tomorrow.



Residents (l-r) Terri Gremillion, Evelyn Williams and Yvonne Bassett attended the Tobacco Prevention and Control Initiative Community Forum in Bunkie.

## Tobacco Prevention and Control: Rick Stoddard



# Stoddard Wants Wife's Legacy 'To Live Forever'



**Cigarettes take everything.**

**R**ick Stoddard wanted the world to know that tobacco killed his 46-year-old wife. He was so passionate about it that he insisted her obituary list her cause of death as “cancer caused by cigarette smoking.”

Those few words – written out of anger, grief and love – turned him into an unlikely champion for a tobacco-free society. “I had no idea what those words were going to stir up,” he said.

Marie Stoddard's candid obituary caught the attention of a Massachusetts anti-smoking coalition, which asked Rick Stoddard if he'd like to say a few words for a commercial. A film crew went to his home, activated the camera and let Rick talk for seven hours. The result: a series of powerful advertisements that details how tobacco destroyed the love of his life.

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## Tobacco Prevention and Control: Rick Stoddard



**“Tobacco is the only product in history that’s been allowed to kill so many people.”**

Rick Stoddard

The Rapides Foundation has been airing Stoddard’s advertisements since January. In one, Stoddard repeats that his wife was 46 when she died of lung cancer. “She died at 46 years old. I guess I never thought of 23 as middle aged.”

Stoddard, now 54, lives in Massachusetts – Marie grew up in the Boston area – but that Southern accent is from Pascagoula, Miss., where he was raised. He was 19 when he met his future wife on a Pascagoula beach. They married and moved north to be near her family.

They both smoked back then – he Camel filters and she Viceroy’s. Rick quit at age 21 when their only son, Justin, was born. Marie longed to kick the habit but just never could escape its grip.

Marie was diagnosed with lung cancer on Aug. 1, 1999. She had no symptoms until the day Justin, 24 at the time, found his mom unconscious on the floor. The diagnosis came soon afterward. Marie died just five months later, on Jan. 8, 2000.

Stoddard let the film crew in his home in April of that year. He moved out of the house not long after that. The memories were too painful. But he continued to shave his head regularly – something he first did to lift Marie’s spirits when radiation treatments caused her hair to fall out.

He now spends most of his life trying to take down the tobacco industry, traveling the country in his Ford pickup for speaking engagements at schools. He’s on the road up to 200 days a year. It leaves little time for his carpentry, but that doesn’t matter now – he won’t stop until the world is tobacco-free.

His message resonates with youths, who see in him an honest man with a simple message: don’t use tobacco because “it will kill you, just like it killed my wife.”

“I’m just a regular guy. I don’t tell them what to do,” he said. “Kids are cool. They will give you a fair chance. If you’re a phony, they’ll shoot you down. If you’re not, they’ll listen to you.”

If he keeps up his grueling schedule, Stoddard in March should have reached a milestone in his anti-tobacco campaign – delivering his message to the millionth person. That number doesn’t include the millions more who’ve never met him but who have seen or heard his television and radio ads.

Stoddard calls himself a “regular guy who was put in some extraordinary circumstances” and said he used to be a “very private guy” before becoming a national spokesman. But he’s fueled by the memories of Marie.

He’s had some hate mail, mainly from people saying he is “picking on the tobacco industry.” But he shrugs off the cynics with this thought: “Tobacco is the only product in history that’s been allowed to kill so many people. Spinach killed three people and they pulled spinach off of every shelf in the country. But tobacco kills 1,200 people a day in America and that’s OK? Well, it’s just not OK anymore.”

Stoddard has more than 40,000 letters of support, and he keeps them all. They’re from people young and old who are touched by his message. Those letters, and Marie’s memory, are what prevent him from quitting it all, returning to his carpentry and spending more time with his two grandchildren.

“This has not been an easy journey but I am determined that Marie’s death will not be in vain,” he said. “I hope her story and legacy will live forever.”

## Tobacco Prevention and Control/Get Healthy Cenla

# The Rapides Foundation launches its new **Get Healthy Cenla** Web site.

Visit [www.gethealthycenla.org](http://www.gethealthycenla.org) for information about the important areas of tobacco, diet and physical activity.



" Let's get moving, eat better and kick tobacco."

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