



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Great Impasta in Champaign Goes Smoke-Free
Public Health to Award Smoke Free Recognition Certificate on March 23

"I'm in the hospitality business, and I wasn't offering the best hospitality."

–Harold Allston, Owner, The Great Impasta

CHAMPAIGN – The Great Impasta, at 114 W. Church St., Champaign, is now a smoke-free restaurant. Owner Harold Allston chose to make his restaurant smoke-free this week, adding his establishment to a growing list of eateries that are getting rid of their smoking sections altogether.

Mr. Allston said several factors contributed to his decision to go smoke-free. First, trying to keep smoke from non-smokers was impossible. "I thought the restaurant was big enough, but you can't keep it from the non-smoking section."

Mr. Allston says that it became very personal for him when a customer was having an asthma attack in December from the secondhand smoke. "I felt terrible for her wheezing and coughing like that, and I thought, 'Here I am in the hospitality industry, and I am not offering the best hospitality to all my guest'"

"I still want smokers to come to my establishment. We put out such a unique product, hopefully, people won't stay away. We offer food with such great tastes and textures, and the tobacco smoke interferes with the flavors, and that's what it's about"

"We are very excited by the decision of The Great Impasta to become a smoke-free establishment," said Nikki Hillier, who coordinates the Illinois Smoke Free Restaurant

Recognition program in Champaign County. “People often voice concerns about the economic hardship going smoke-free might cause, especially to the local food and bar industry, but it seems the local restaurant owners are just as – if not more – supportive. Many would like the city to establish a consistent citywide policy first. Yet, many restaurateurs such as Mr. Allston feel that being smoke-free is important enough to move forward with – whether the city acts or not.”

“We applaud Mr. Allston for going smoke-free, and while it might seem that the market is fixing itself, there are about 4 restaurants going smoke-free in Champaign-Urbana each year. At this rate, it will take 35 years to get 80% of hospitality establishments to go smoke-free,” said Ms. Hillier. “So, the market is not fixing itself.”

At 4 p.m. on Thursday, March 23, representatives of Public Health will give The Great Impasta a certificate from the Illinois Smoke-free Restaurant Recognition Program. This statewide program recognizes restaurants that have gone entirely smoke-free and raises public awareness to the dangers of exposure to second-hand smoke. Establishments choosing to participate in the program receive the certificate and are listed on the Illinois Department of Public Health’s web site (<http://www.idph.state.il.us/tobacco/smoke-freelisting.htm>) . The Great Impasta will also appear in the Champaign County Smoke Free Restaurant Guide.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has determined that second-hand smoke cannot be reduced to safe levels indoors. Workers in businesses that allow smoking indoors are at a greater risk for heart attacks, cardiovascular disease, cancer and respiratory disease. Patrons of such businesses may also suffer the ill effects of exposure to second-hand smoke.

Both the Champaign County Public Health Department and the Champaign-Urbana Public Health District have voted to support a resolution calling for the elimination of second-hand smoke in public places.

The text of the resolution, sponsored by the C-U Smokefree Alliance, is provided below.

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Resolution to Eliminate Secondhand Smoke in Public Places

Whereas, the U.S. Surgeon General has determined that simple separation of smokers and nonsmokers within the same air space does not eliminate the exposure of nonsmokers to secondhand smoke.

Whereas, numerous studies have found that tobacco smoke is a major contributor to indoor air pollution, and that breathing secondhand smoke is a cause of disease in healthy nonsmokers, including heart disease, stroke, respiratory disease and lung cancer. The National Cancer Institute determined in 1999 that secondhand smoke is responsible for the early deaths of 65,000 Americans annually.

Whereas, the Environmental Protection Agency has determined that secondhand smoke cannot be reduced to safe levels in businesses by high rates of ventilation. Air cleaners, which are capable of filtering the particulate matter and odors in smoke, do not eliminate the known 5,000 chemicals - including arsenic, cyanide and formaldehyde and other toxins - in secondhand smoke.

Whereas, employees who work in smoke-filled businesses suffer a 25-50% higher risk of heart attack and higher rates of death from cardiovascular disease and cancer, as well as increased acute respiratory disease and measurable decrease in lung function.

Whereas, smoke-filled workplaces result in higher worker absenteeism due to respiratory disease, lower productivity, higher cleaning and maintenance costs, increased health insurance rates, and increased liability claims for diseases related to exposure to secondhand smoke.

Whereas, there is conclusive proof that smokefree air laws do not have adverse economic consequences for businesses subject to them; moreover, there is much evidence that smokefree air laws have a positive economic effect on those businesses.

Be it therefore resolved, that the undersigned organization endorses the C-U Smokefree Campaign, which will work to:

- Protect the public health and welfare by prohibiting smoking in public places and places of employment
- Guarantee the right of nonsmokers to breathe smoke-free air.

Be it therefore resolved, that the undersigned organization will:

- Inform its members and the general public of its endorsement of this Resolution
- Inform local elected officials of its endorsement and urge its members to do the same.

– Champaign County Public Health Department and Champaign-Urbana Public Health District

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