

# **Approximately 4 Out of 5 Oconto County Businesses Do Not Sell Tobacco to Minors**

## ***Rate at Taverns Has Dropped Dramatically***

WI Wins teams made up of teenagers ages 15-16 chaperoned by an adult visited 20 businesses in Oconto County on Saturday, April 21<sup>st</sup>, attempting to purchase cigarettes or another tobacco product.

On that date, only four of the businesses checked sold tobacco illegally to the minors. None of the businesses that sold tobacco to the teens asked to see their IDs which would have shown they are under age 18.

Oconto County's current rate of illegal sales is about 21%, much lower than the 2006 rate of nearly 33%.

The rate of illegal sales in taverns has dramatically dropped in 2007. In 2006, teens were able to buy tobacco at 2 out of every 5 taverns they visited, or 41%. In 2007, the rate has plummeted to just over 1 out of 10 or 13%.

However, the rate of convenience store illegal sales has soared from 29% in 2006 to 42% in 2007.

“From 2004 to 2006, WI Wins teams were able to buy tobacco at about 1/3 of the businesses they visited, so we are pleased with the reduction in the rate of sales so far in 2007. We encourage businesses owners to continually train their employees on how to correctly read an ID,” stated Sara Applebee, WI Wins Program Coordinator.

Due to the fact that Oconto County's rate of illegal tobacco sales to minors has been higher than the state's rate since 2004, police departments in Oconto County will be issuing citations to clerks and license holders who illegally sell tobacco to minors.

Wisconsin state law prohibits the sale of any tobacco product to anyone under the age of 18. Many communities in Wisconsin, including Oconto County, participate in a program called “Wisconsin Wins” which is designed to recognize clerks who refuse to sell tobacco products to minors, ultimately reducing the number of tobacco products sold to youth. The program, which was unveiled in June of 2002, was created after a statewide study conducted in 2001 revealed that nearly 34% of vendors sold tobacco products to minors. Wisconsin Wins has shown very positive results; the most recent statewide survey showed that about 8% of Wisconsin vendors sell tobacco illegally to teens. For more information on the Wisconsin Wins program, please go to [www.wisconsinwins.com](http://www.wisconsinwins.com).