

Fewer Businesses Selling Tobacco Illegally to Minors *Police Departments Issuing Citations*

WI Wins teams made up of teenagers 15-17 chaperoned by an adult have visited 43 businesses in Oconto County attempting to purchase cigarettes or another tobacco product. Only nine of those businesses have illegally sold tobacco to the minors. Six of the businesses have been convenience stores, two taverns and one restaurant. Oconto County's current rate of illegal sales is about 21%, much lower than the 2006 rate of nearly 33%.

At three of the businesses that sold, employees checked the minor's IDs which shows that he/she is under 18 and continued to sell tobacco to the minor.

"Employees at businesses with a tobacco license need much more training on how to check an ID," states Sara Applebee, WI Wins Program Coordinator. "Just because a teen shows an ID doesn't mean that they are 18."

"WI WINS teams have been able to buy tobacco at about 1/3 of the businesses they have checked since 2004 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 Applebee.

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.