

# Montreat College's Student Voice

# THE WHEATSTONE

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## Tobacco-Free Campus: We are Tobacco Free, But are We Really Free?

### Q & A with Wellness Coordinator, Keri Boer

#### *Why did the school decide to go tobacco-free?*

Montreat College is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment. We want to reduce pollution, including cigarette butts. We want to allow non-smokers to breathe clean air throughout the campus and give an incentive to those who do use tobacco to quit. Creating tobacco-free work spaces has been shown to aid people in quitting.

If you'd like to see statistics on the consequences of smoking, secondhand smoke, and chewing tobacco go to [www.schs.state.nc.us/SCHS/data/brfss.cfm](http://www.schs.state.nc.us/SCHS/data/brfss.cfm).

#### *Were there any students involved in the decision?*

Yes, the BRIDGE (SGA) was involved in creating the tobacco-free policy and they signed a letter of support for the policy.

#### *What kind of support programs are there to help students quit?*

We have posted resources for quitting throughout the campus and have a webpage on the Montreat College site. They can also receive information from the Health Center.

We are promoting the NC Quitline (1-800-QUIT NOW). It's free and available 8AM-midnight, seven days a week. Those who use the Quitline are up to seven times more likely to quit than those who try to quit on their own. It provides a coach who works with the person over the phone to make a plan and stick to it.

We also provide funding for anyone who wants to attend a "Freedom from Smoking" support/education group. These groups meet for eight weeks and follow a program developed by the American Lung Association. We can also bring one of these facilitators to campus if we have enough interest.

Students may see a physician for a prescription medication designed to reduce the craving for nicotine.

#### *What about the students who don't want to quit?*

We care about all of our students and accept their choices regarding tobacco use. These students may use tobacco off campus in designated smoking areas on private property or on public grounds that have no tobacco restrictions. We ask that they be good neighbors to those near our campuses. This includes not using tobacco on private property without designated smoking areas. Basically, all of the property in Montreat is privately owned. So, for instance, students can not just smoke on the lawn of a neighboring house. There are urns located at the Montreat Conference Center that designate their smoking areas.

#### *What are the consequences for smoking on campus?*

The complete details of the progressive compliance policy are included in the student handbook. Those who are observed using tobacco will receive a written warning, progressive fines, community service and a meeting with the Assistant Dean for Student Life.

#### *What do you think has been the student reaction to this change?*

I am gathering specific statistics from a campus survey conducted last year. Last spring, 96% of School of Arts and Sciences students are in favor of some tobacco-restriction policy, and 43% of students were in favor of the 100% tobacco-free policy. Also, 78% of our SAS students reported that they do not use tobacco.

#### *How much money did the college receive for going smoke-free? How will this benefit the students, as they are most affected by this change?*

Our grant is \$74,755 over a two and a half year period (January 2008-June 2010). It is funded by the NC Health and Wellness

Trust Fund, a state organization. This is a grant for the Tobacco-Free Colleges initiative. The money is given out as we use it for specific, pre-approved activities related specifically for implementing and promoting the tobacco-free policy.

The money is used for a variety of costs. Some primary uses are to pay for the position of Wellness Coordinator, supplies for events, publicity of quitting resources, surveys regarding the effectiveness of the policy, paying for those students who want to utilize the Freedom from Smoking support group or other cessation resources that have a fee attached, computer and video equipment for the student-produced documentary and announcements and updated versions to this documentary. The money is controlled by the grant organization to ensure it is used appropriately.



### A Smoker's Perspective: Gessi Boyd

When I first heard about the impending tobacco-free policy at Montreat, as a smoker, I was dismayed. I have been a smoker for quite a few years and the majority of my friends are smokers; so at once I was opposed for personal reasons, but all personal reasons aside, I disagree with the policy for philosophical reasons as well. Montreat College is not Bob Jones, nor is it Covenant. It is a Christian college not a Christian high school; we are responsible for our own actions and choices, and we knowingly bear the repercussions of those decisions. As long as smoking remains legal in our country, it is ludicrous for our college to dictate to us what health decisions we should make.

Everyone knows the health risks of tobacco use. As I pull my next cigarette out of the pack, I can read the potential risks in plain English. *SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Smoking Causes Lung Cancer, Heart Disease, Emphysema, And May Complicate Pregnancy.* Considering that I can read on a sixth grade level, the consequences of my actions seem pretty clear. That being said, let's address the other issues that could have influenced our colleges decision to enact this policy—the risk of secondhand smoke. As statistics plainly say, secondhand smoke is dangerous, but saying that smoking outside on campus is dangerous to non-smoking students is naive. I'll stand my ground until it can be proven that if someone stands in an open field liberally applying hair spray, a person five feet away is in danger of secondhand toxin build up.

Taking these points into consideration, it seems clear to me that the actual question is how long will we stand by as our personal decisions are made for us. We are told this policy has been enacted in the consideration of public health, but has it really? What has really driven this decision? Should we allow our personal freedoms to be removed for reasons that are nothing more than disguised excuses? Think about the other causes of preventable cancers: microwaved food, hair dye, eggs cooked at high temperatures, cosmetics and artificial sweeteners. How long will it be until those

become outlawed on our campus as well? Maybe they would be, if grants were offered for their removal.

I don't believe that this is an issue between smokers and non-smokers. I do believe that it is more of an issue concerning our rights as citizens. Our choices should not be up for auction.

### A Non-Smoker's Perspective: Rachel Foreman

Who does the new smoke-free campus really benefit? What type of benefit is this? A health benefit? Like keeping a healthy supply of veggies on the salad bar in the cafeteria? The question is—what kind of benefits is Montreat responsible for providing for us? A college is established to give students an education. Does that include physical education? Apparently, considering our required PE credits. But is it health or just physical fitness? What I'm getting at here is whether or not my college education should involve rules about my personal conduct. In some respects the answer is yes. This is a community and it is important for each member of a community to give up a little freedom in order for everyone to be more comfortable. There are taboos in every community, but should there be rules restricting them? Some rules are needed of course; we must wear clothes and not graffiti the campus center (even if it would make the campus more exciting).

How much does Montreat want rebels? Because rules spawn rebels—especially rules that effect personal habits. The smoking ban can't be considered only for the student body's health sake. If it were, they would also have to ban soda on campus, and we would get the nutrition we need at the cafeteria instead of having to take multivitamins to stay healthy.

In general, the new policy has become another rule that caused eyes to roll. As Montreat College doesn't own all the buildings it uses, anyone who smokes can find new places that are just yards away from the smoke-free areas. It doesn't seem to benefit the part of our community who are smokers. These kinds of rules don't make smokers want to quit. In fact, non-smoking rules encourage the typical non-conformist to continue in his non-conformity.

The campus does not seem any healthier or healthier after this decision. It never seemed like there were a lot of smokers on campus and that begs the question of the motivation of this decision on Montreat's part. I've heard rumors of a lot of money coming from sponsors. I have heard students mentioning their curiosity about how the grant is being used—shortly after, they usually mention the raise in tuition. It seems that the students are not convinced of the motivations of the college in initiating such a ban. I'm not sure if any of us feel like we know why the college is trying to get stricter and stricter with its rules.

It seems to me that this ban is like a dress code. I can understand the reasons behind it and the purpose of such a rule, but have never seen complete success in its implementation.



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