



**First 5 Santa Barbara County**  
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## **NEWS RELEASE**

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DATE: September 21, 2016

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **SANTA MARIA CITY COUNCIL PROHIBITS SMOKING IN PARKS**

**(SANTA MARIA, Calif.)** – First 5 Santa Barbara County applauds the Santa Maria City Council who voted unanimously for prohibiting smoking in all city parks and public places by amending the tobacco control ordinance at its meeting on September 20, 2016. The new ordinance will be in effect 30 days.

"Creating healthy outdoor space where children, families and adults can congregate, play and exercise is good government and good policy," said Edwin Weaver, Executive Director, Fighting Back Santa Maria Valley. "I commend our Recreation and Parks Commission for unanimously recommending that our parks be smoke free. I also am very thankful for our city council for voting unanimously to put health first. This is a great day for our city and our community."

Despite setbacks in previous years, Weaver worked with others to make sure that the issue came back before the Santa Maria City Council. Fighting Back Santa Maria Valley connects families with smoking cessation programs and resources. Weaver and his staff modeled how local leaders can work together with city agencies such as the Parks & Recreation Department to make a big impact on the health of children.

First 5 supports this effort to provide children and families a healthy environment to play in which they are not exposed to secondhand smoke. According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, chemicals in cigarettes and tobacco products restrict food and oxygen to babies in the womb, making small and preterm babies more likely among pregnant smokers. Children living with smokers have increased rates of bronchitis, pneumonia, ear infection, asthma attacks, and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Statistic say nicotine in tobacco smoke damages fetal brain cells, making learning, attention and behavior problems more likely as children grow.

It is essential that we demonstrate a healthy, tobacco-free community norm, especially for our youth. Allowing tobacco use in parks, on beaches, and in other recreation areas where youth and families with young children gather could send a mixed message about healthy living. Preventing exposure to smoke as families enjoy beautiful Santa Maria will help our children stay healthy now while reducing health care costs to our community in the future.

#### **About First 5 Santa Barbara County**

First 5 Santa Barbara County Children and Families Commission, funded by Proposition 10 works in partnership with individuals and organizations throughout the county, to support the health, early learning and well-being of children pre-natal to age 5 and their families. Call (805) 884-8085 or visit [www.first5sbc.org](http://www.first5sbc.org)

