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Smoke-free patio program reaches 100 restaurants in Riverside County

Rosy Barrios, general manager of the Carl's Jr. south of Corona, didn't hesitate when Riverside County health officials asked her to consider making her restaurant's patio smoke-free.

"I had a good friend who died from cancer," said Barrios, who has managed the fast-food restaurant for the past five years, as she explained why she decided to make the patio area smoke-free.

Sitting under an umbrella on the patio, Barrios was all smiles as she talked about the eatery becoming the 100th restaurant to join the Tobacco Control Project's smoke-free patio program. The project, part of the Riverside County Department of Public Health, is designed to help customers and employees breathe easier by cutting back on exposure to second-hand smoke.

The campaign, which costs nothing to join, started during the summer of 2010. The first business to join was the Crescent Jewell Restaurant and Lounge, which signed on in December 2010. Since then, a wide range of businesses have joined the campaign, from small mom-and-pop eateries to the larger restaurants like those at the Mission Inn.

Barrios did not know her restaurant off Temescal Canyon Road and Interstate 15 was the 100th to join the campaign when she agreed, but said it is a nice designation.

"It's good to help," she said.

Assistant Manager Dennis Derouen, who has asthma, said he appreciates the cleaner air.

"It can be hard to breathe when there is smoke in the air," he said, surveying several "no smoking" signs recently posted on the patio. "It's nice to know there will be no smoking here."

The campaign expanded to Moreno Valley and Corona with a goal of reaching 150 restaurants.

“The restaurants have been excited to be part of the program,” said Consuela T. Edmond, who runs the Tobacco Control Project and Asthma Program. “They were thrilled to provide their patrons and employees with a healthier place to eat and work.”

Edmond noted that today (May 31) is World No Tobacco Day, which is a campaign to educate the public of the dangers of tobacco products.

Health officials have warned about the hazards of second-hand smoke for many years and have connected it to 50,000 deaths nationally each year and to rising health care costs. While smoking has been prohibited inside restaurants for years, Edmond said waiters and waitresses continue to be exposed to second-hand smoke at establishments that permit patio smoking.

For a complete list of the 100 participating restaurants or to learn more about the Tobacco Control Project, go to www.rivcotcp.org



Consuela Edmond, with the Riverside County Department of Public Health, presents a certificate to Rosy Barrios, general manager of the Carl's Jr. south of Corona, after the eatery became the 100 restaurant in Riverside County to take part in the smoke-free patio program.