

## Smoking and Pregnancy Don't Mix

*A public health story from...*

**St. Joseph-Buchanan County Health Department**

*Smoking rates exceed state and national average.*

**L**ike drinking and driving, smoking and pregnancy don't mix. Sheila Montgomery\* a teenage mother experienced a devastating tragedy associated with her addiction to cigarettes.

Buchanan, Andrew, and Platte Counties have double the amount of smokers during pregnancy at 20.2 percent compared to the national average of 10.2 percent.

At age 15, Sheila came to the St. Joseph-Buchanan County Health Department for help. She was pregnant and smoked three packs a day. She received counseling and by the end of the pregnancy she had reduced to smoking one pack a day. With only a ninth grade education, she decided to stay home to take care of her baby.

Two years later, at age 17, Sheila found herself in the same situation. Again, the health department counseled her during her pregnancy to help her stop smoking.

"Sheila is a prime example how smoking is an addiction and a difficult habit to break," said Mary Roy, community health nurse of St. Joseph-Buchanan County. "Counseling smokers to quit smoking can be a vicious cycle, but when someone quits it is a huge personal success."

During the first trimester of her third pregnancy, Sheila once again was back to smoking a pack of cigarettes a day. Her baby was born one month early. At the age of six weeks, she lost her baby due to SIDS.

"She was devastated when she found out her baby died of SIDS, known to be associated with the secondhand smoke."

Sheila's sister, Amy\*, also a smoker, found help at the health department.

"When we started counseling Amy and discussed the death of her sister's baby, she immediately stated that she did not want her baby to be at risk for SIDS because of exposure to secondhand smoke. Education, increasing the cost of cigarettes, and enforcement of smoke-free environmental ordinances and laws are key elements that would help reduce the smoking population in St. Joseph."

"The purpose of the health department is to help those who need assistance when they have nowhere else to go. Smokefree policies have been shown to cause a decrease in consumption of tobacco as many smokers will smoke fewer cigarettes and some smokers will quit entirely. An ordinance for smokefree workplaces and public places is something our local health department is interested in pursuing."

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*\*(The case described is real, but the name has been changed).*