

Viewpoints

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AS READERS SEE IT

Hollywood: Put down that cigarette

You are probably aware that tobacco is America's No. 1 cause of preventable death. But did you know that Hollywood helps recruit 390,000 new youth smokers a year in the U.S. alone, of whom 120,000 will ultimately die from tobacco-related diseases? Or that 80 percent of smokers start before the legal smoking age of 18?

Luckily, there is a simple way children can be protected from this: Rate new movies with smoking "R."

Numerous studies over the past decade have shown that smoking in movies influences teens to begin smoking. Teens exposed to smoking in the movies are two to three times more likely to start smoking than other adolescents. Movies with smoking are more powerful even than a parent's own personal example! The good news is chances are excellent that kids who graduate high school as nonsmokers will be nonsmokers for life.

Currently, three out of four PG-13 movies contain

tobacco imagery. "Cars" and "101 Dalmatians" are just two examples of movies where prominent characters smoke. Even though the use of tobacco in movies is unnecessary and leads to smoking in young people, movie studios insist on glamorizing it and promoting it as desirable behavior.

The Muskegon County Medical Society and Medical Society Alliance are pleased to join America's leading medical and health organizations in supporting the effort to achieve four important goals which will minimize the extent to which youth are exposed to smoking in films.

We want Hollywood to:

1. Rate new movies with smoking "R."
2. Certify no pay-offs, meaning movie producers should document that no one received anything of value in exchange for using or displaying tobacco products.
3. Require strong anti-smoking ads. Ads should air before films with any tobacco presence, regardless of rating.
4. Stop identifying tobacco brands. Tobacco brands should not be identified in movies nor should brand

images appear in action or background scenes.

Protecting Michigan's children is top priority and supporting this effort is a step in the right direction. We urge all community-based organizations and parents to write the major motion picture studios and talk to local theater owners. At the very least, sign a petition that acknowledges your desire for smoke-free kids' movies. You will find petitions and more information locally at The Gym in North Muskegon and The Trophy House on Henry.

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Your 'concern' left them in danger

A message to the person who left an adult iguana during the night in the dog coop at the Humane Society parking lot. If it should be of interest to you — the animal froze to death.

To the person who abandoned four cats in carriers and a rabbit in a box by the road at the Humane Society driveway with a note: "We hate to leave them here. But Vector will kill them." Your thoughtless action put these helpless animals in extreme danger. All could have been killed by oncoming traffic. Do the animals a favor. Don't get anymore.

It is irresponsible and ignorant people such as you that keeps Humane Society shelters in business and the voice of the voiceless.

Thank you!

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LETTERS POLICY

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