



Farmers' Markets Are Healthier in Red Bluff and Chico



INTRODUCTION

With help from the American Lung Association (ALA), the Downtown Chico Business Association (DCBA) in Butte County and the Red Bluff Chamber of Commerce (RBCC) in Tehama County adopted smokefree policies for farmers' markets in May 2021. Now the DCBA Thursday Night Market and the RBCC Wednesday and Saturday Farmers' Markets are smokefree!

SEIZING OPPORTUNITY

When the ALA began its work on smokefree policies for farmers' markets in March 2021, things were starting to look hopeful on the COVID-19 front—vaccinations were more widely available and community events had started to reopen. ALA staff saw this as an opportunity to help event organizers prioritize lung health and reopen smokefree. They contacted as many event organizers as possible to offer both resources on the benefits of smokefree events and support for implementing a policy. While most of the people contacted either didn't respond or responded "no," two accepted the offer of help. Staff stepped in to help the DCBA and the RBCC draft the smokefree event policies and supplied signage.

FINDING THE RIGHT MESSAGE

During their outreach, ALA staff found that many event organizers shared the concern that the policy forced restrictions on event attendees. When there was room for discussion, though, ALA staff focused on the rights of individuals to enjoy smokefree spaces and the need to protect lung health in the community during the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, this talking point is still highly relevant as COVID-19 continues to spread in California.

Although long-term strategic planning is a best practice when working on tobacco control policies, this story shows that in some cases, "seeing what sticks" can work. At a time when many perceive conflict between public health and business operations, especially in rural communities, ALA staff found business-oriented partners who want to protect the health of their communities and just needed help getting there.

