



Four Quinte High School Baseball Teams Pledge To Be Tobacco-Free, July 2010

Four local high school baseball teams in Hastings and Prince Edward Counties are now tobacco-free. The schools involved in promoting the tobacco-free sport and recreation message are Centennial Secondary, Prince Edward Collegiate, St. Paul Secondary and Nicholson Secondary.

The Tobacco-Free Sport and Recreation initiative and Hastings and Prince Edward Counties Health Unit are striving to create the healthiest possible environment for youth and everyone involved in sports and recreation. According to the players participating in the tobacco-free baseball program 83% of players strongly support the tobacco-free policy. Also, 81% feel the tobacco-free baseball program is effective in encouraging children not to smoke.

PECI Panthers outfielder Evan Minnie, a 17-year-old in grade 12, had to make a choice: quit smoking or quit the baseball team. For more than two years Minnie has smoked a half a pack of cigarettes a day. On the first day of baseball tryouts, coaches made the team run laps and it had an impact on Minnie. "This year I ran half a lap and I was pretty much dead," said Minnie, who has been smoke-free for more than six weeks now. "I can't go back to the way I was before. Now I feel more like getting out and doing things."

The Tobacco-Free Sport and Recreation program links with the new smoke-free playing fields by-law in Belleville and Quinte West. By banning smoking 25 meters from all parks and playing fields it can make a difference in changing community norms around tobacco use and help reduce youth smoking.

The 2010-2011 season hopes to extend the tobacco-free message across the entire Quinte High School Baseball League.

Submitted by Jordan Prosper, Hastings & Prince Edward Counties Health Unit