



BURLINGTON, IOWA
HAWK-EYE
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In The Hawk-Eye Spotlight

A Puff At 15; A Cough At 51?

By JACKIE MAXWELL

TODAY about 4,500 young people will smoke their first cigarette, if this is an average day.

If the trend continues an estimated 1.5 million youngsters will take up smoking this year.

Some boys and girls take their first puffs as early as 10 years of age. Many have the smoking habit in junior high school. By the time they graduate from high school, half the teenagers in the nation are smoking.

These jarring facts are based on national statistics.

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JUST HOW widespread smoking is locally was indicated by a study made of 400 students at Notre Dame high school. A total of 116 students, or 29 percent of the ND student body, identified themselves as smokers.

Burlington high school principal Leroy Pease said that while he has no accurate way to tell, he estimates that between a quarter and a half of the BHS student body smokes.

Of the Notre Dame smokers, 97 said they are able to buy their own cigarettes.

Yet most of the students are under 18, the legal age to purchase cigarettes over the counter or in vending machines.

IF YOUNGSTERS below 18 can buy cigarettes somebody is violating state law.

Police chief Robert Dunham said, "It has been quite a while since we've had a complaint from anybody about the sale of cigarettes to minors."

"I think, perhaps, they have graduated to beer and whiskey," he said, judging from the number of complaints.

Complaints are always checked out, Chief Dunham and Safety Commissioner Harold Miller said. Previous complaints that minors were getting cigarettes were from parents and school people, Dunham said.

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ANY MINOR in possession of cigarettes outside his home is required by Iowa law to give information as to where he or she obtained them if questioned by a peace officer.

If the minor refuses to give information he can be found guilty of a misdemeanor, the Code provides.

Any convicted minor who gives information which leads to the arrest of the person selling cigarettes to minors may have his sentence suspended at the discretion of the court.

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NOTRE DAME Principal Father Arthur Perry and Burlington high school Principal Pease agreed the law is almost impossible to enforce.

"Many parents permit their youngsters to smoke," Pease said.

Both local high schools have adopted measures to limit smoking at school and on the school grounds.

Notre Dame has the most stringent rules. Smoking is not permitted at any time on the school grounds or in the building. A violator on the first offense will receive a 3-day suspension from school with loss of 2 percent per day from his grade point average for each class missed, a \$5 fine paid before re-admission plus a conference with the principal, pastor and parents.

The second offense is punishable by immediate suspension from school for the remainder of the semester.

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IF A ND student is apprehended with smoking equipment on his person, he is subject to a \$5 fine

Enforcement

and a 3-day suspension, Father Perry added.

"We have a smoking problem," Perry pointed out, "and enforcement of the rules is difficult since we are here primarily to educate rather than police."

He pointed to vending machines as the easiest opportunity for minors to obtain cigarettes illegally, in stores and gas stations where no one watches.

"If permits are granted to sell cigarettes, someone should be responsible to enforce the law so that minors cannot get them," he added.

"Of course kids can steal cigarettes from home," he said.

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"WE DON'T permit smoking in BHS or on the block," Pease said, "nor on the way to and from the fieldhouse."

"But there are offenders," he admitted.

If a BHS student is found with cigarettes in his possession, the smokes are confiscated, Pease said. Repeated offenses demand stricter actions, he said.

First-time offenders caught smoking are given a 5-hour detention, Pease said. Second-time offenders are usually suspended for several days and before they are readmitted a conference is held with parents present, he said.

BHS students are not supposed to smoke at football and basketball games, Pease said, and he added he is pretty well pleased with the way students cooperate.

"We don't allow smoking at dances. Sometimes they go outside to smoke," Pease said.

"At night activities, we take care of what we see but we don't go out looking for offenders," Pease said.

"We also try to prevent student drinking and I think we have had very little of it," he added.

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