

Hodges University and Avow Hospice ban smoking

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Naples Daily News
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

There's no such thing as a smoking break on the campus of Hodges University in North Naples.

Avow Hospice, a comprehensive palliative care and end-of-life support organization in Naples, also has banned use of tobacco products at its campus at 1095 Whippoorwill Lane.

Both join a growing list of businesses that have gone tobacco free to help employees and clients kick the habit, at

least while on their campuses.

Hodges, 2647 Professional Circle in Naples, joins 34 other colleges and universities around the state that have prohibited use of tobacco products on campus. Other campuses in the region that are tobacco free are Florida Southwestern State College and Florida Gulf Coast University.

Hodges is providing students, faculty and staff with smoking cessation resources and will offer on-site cessation classes.

"Implementing tobacco-free policies on university and college campuses not

only improves the health of these communities and helps make Florida a healthier state but also helps to change attitudes toward tobacco," said Nina Garcia, the tobacco prevention coordinator with the Florida Department of Health in Collier County.

Smoking and tobacco use is declining in Florida, and research shows prohibiting smoking on campuses helps people lessen their dependence on tobacco products.

By prohibiting smoking, exposure to secondhand smoke also is reduced.

According to the U.S. Centers for Dis-

ease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, 15 percent of adults in Florida smoke.

Each year nearly 29,000 Florida residents die from smoking, and for every death, another 20 people suffer from one or more illnesses related to smoking, according to the state health department.

Avow, which has 200 employees, adopted a tobacco-free policy in November and prohibits e-cigarettes from being used by anyone on campus, including contractors.

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“Avow updated its smoke and tobacco-free workplace policy to continue providing a clean, safe, healthy, and productive environment for all employees, visitors, and volunteers,” Jason Roa, president and CEO of Avow, said in a statement.

Avow offered smoking cessation classes to staff and their family members, he said.

“Updating our smoke and tobacco-free workplace policy is just one part of our ongoing efforts to promote employee health and wellbeing,” Roa said.

The Collier health department knows of 14 worksites and 41 multihousing complexes that are tobacco-free, but there are likely more, spokeswoman Andrea McKinney said. The agency needs to have a copy of a worksite’s tobacco-free policy for it to be included in the report to the Bureau of Tobacco Free Florida, she said.

The Blue Zones Project of Southwest Florida, a health and wellness initiative,

has a list of 24 businesses, including Avow and Hodges, that are tobacco-free.

The Blue Zones project was introduced to Southwest Florida in 2015 based on the travels of Dan Buettner, who identified communities worldwide where people share lifestyle traits and live to 100 or older. He wrote a New York Times best-seller about the nine principles of longevity.

The “Power Nine” include moving naturally by being physically active, eating a plant-slant diet, knowing your purpose in life, taking time to relax, having a healthy social network and putting loved ones first. A popular activity is to form walking groups at worksites, which gets people active and engaging with one another.

Tobacco Free Collier, which works to reduce tobacco usage and prevent young people from using tobacco products, reports 19,000 kids under the age of 18 start smoking cigarettes each year.

For information on how to quit smoking, call the Florida Department of Health and its Quit Coach at 877-U-CAN-NOW or 877-822-6669. The website is www.tobaccofreeflorida.com.