

## THE SITUATION

Since 1995, shoppers in the Piedmont Triad (a nine-county area of Central North Carolina) have been requesting that area shopping centers become smoke-free. During 1998, requests escalated in the form of written and verbal complaints. While numerous other shopping centers across the country had easily adopted smoke-free policies, Piedmont Triad malls faced a huge sensitivity issue being in the heart of the nation's tobacco industry. Tobacco has a 6.5 billion-dollar annual impact on the Piedmont Triad and a 13 billion-dollar annual impact on the state of North Carolina. Tobacco also accounts for 5% of the gross state product. Since the tobacco industry affects each and every resident of the Piedmont Triad area, regardless of whether or not they smoke, enacting a smoke-free policy at the independently owned Four Seasons Town Centre and their competition, Oak Hollow Mall, owned by CBL & Associates, would present a tough challenge that could affect public perception and sales at both regional malls.

The management teams at both centers had been communicating for several years about the possibility of implementing a smoke free policy. Both teams realized that this would be an extremely sensitive issue among shoppers and in the media given the importance of tobacco to the area. However, with increasing customer demands for smoke-free malls and the extensive amount of research concerning the negative effects of second hand smoke, both malls knew they had to take a stand. Further encouraging the malls to act, was the fact that Four Seasons Town Centre was undergoing a \$15,000,000 renovation which included soft seating areas and carpeted amphitheater which could be easily damaged by smoke or cigarette burns. Oak Hollow Mall was experiencing problems with teens "hanging out" in their existing designated smoking areas causing a disruption to business for stores located near these areas. The management teams determined that a joint announcement and campaign would be the best way to communicate this policy and the reasons for it to the public and the media. Both teams felt that the policy would have more impact, be easier to implement, and be better received by shoppers and the media if it were a joint effort.

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Four Seasons Town Centre and Oak Hollow Mall, two centers that normally go "head to head" for both exposure and sales began the process of implementing a smoke-free policy together. The third major shopping center in the market was also contacted about participating, and although they were unwilling to commit to a tri-center effort, they were willing to implement a smoke-free policy during First Quarter, 1999. Since the three centers in the market had the same intentions, Four Seasons and Oak Hollow proceeded with plans for a joint campaign.

## OBJECTIVES

1. To develop a positive public service campaign as a joint effort with a competitive center to minimize both campaign costs and potential negative publicity. The campaign should increase community-wide awareness, and feature a joint announcement, press conference, press kit, and collaterals.
  2. To implement the Share the Air program utilizing public relations and publicity rather than through paid advertising achieving 130 inches of print coverage (combined in all three major newspapers), 20 minutes of broadcast television coverage (combined on all four network affiliates), and 10 minutes of broadcast radio coverage (combined on at least five radio stations).
  3. Implement the program in a way that would not alienate shoppers or negatively impact sales trends at either center.
  4. To enforce the program in a way that would create "customer friendly" approaches to violators resulting in zero negative security situations.
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## PLAN OUTLINE & IMPLEMENTATION

The marketing directors from Four Seasons Town Centre and Oak Hollow Mall met to devise a plan for taking both centers smoke-free by February 1, 1999. Key factors were the involvement with the American Cancer Society and Project Assist (a division of the County Health Department which offers smoking cessation assistance) to gather the most up-to-date information about the adverse effects of second hand smoke. In addition, contact was made with other malls that had recently gone smoke free, as well as with ICSC for the most recent statistics regarding smoke-free malls in the United States.

A time line was developed and a collateral concept was agreed upon. It was critical for the marketing direction to deliver a message that was not intrusive and that focused on providing a clean indoor shopping environment rather than a negative "No Smoking Allowed" approach. The collaterals featured an "Audubon" feel with an actual photo of green trees along with the tag line "Share the Air." Special customer courtesy cards were developed for each center's security staff to use when approaching patrons that were smoking in the mall. Four Seasons Town Centre's cards offered a free pack of Chicklets donated by a mall candy store while Oak Hollow Mall's cards offered a free soft drink provided by a mall food vendor. In addition, matching posters and door decals were developed to reinforce the new policy. Each center developed plans to educate mall employees about the policy change as well as to train their staff to approach smokers and inform them of the new policy in a non-confrontational manner. Prior to any media announcements, merchants at both centers were informed of the policy changes via a special merchant information packet containing background information on the smoking issue, time lines as well and questions and answers to anticipated shopper questions. Retailers were asked for their assistance in cooperating with the smoke-free policy. It was important to have the retailers "onboard" since many of them are smokers too.

Once the strategy and internal dynamics of the program were developed, a joint announcement, media alert, and press kit were designed by the marketing directors. To prevent a possible media "circus" at the centers, and to take away any possible negative impact, a joint press conference was scheduled for January 21, 1999 at a neutral location. Arrangements were made for a media tour of Four Seasons Town Centre after the press conference, where members of the media could interview shoppers regarding the new policy as well as shoot file film for their stories in a controlled environment. The smoke free policy took effect at both centers on February 1, 1999.

## EXPENSE SUMMARY

### Expenses:

Press Kits:	\$75.21
Collaterals: Posters, Door Decals, & Customer Courtesy Cards:	
Four Seasons Town Centre:	\$2,004.50*
Oak Hollow Mall:	\$1,384.25*
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Total Cost:	\$3,463.96

### Sponsorship:

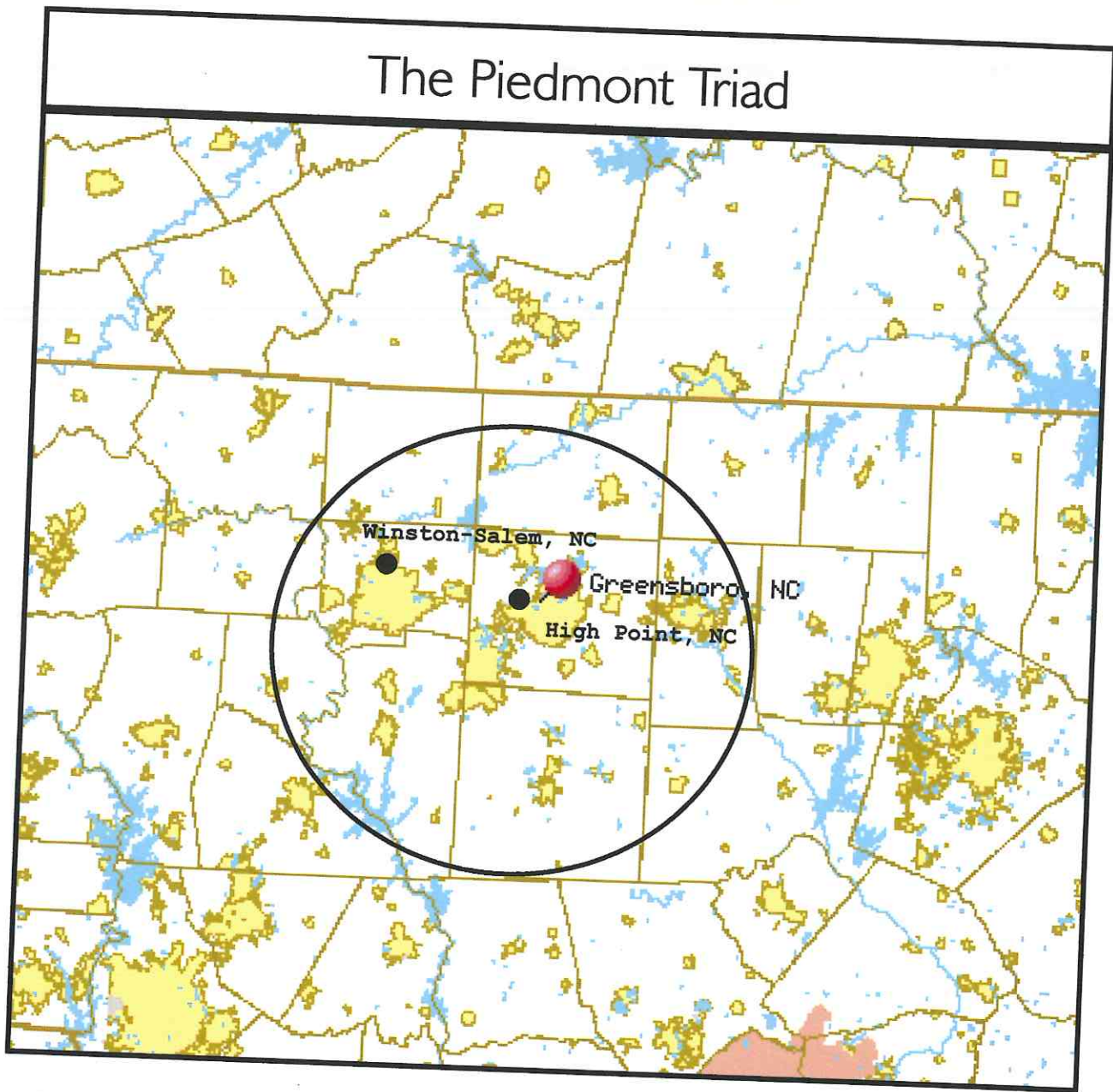
Press Conference Facilities & Refreshments: (Provided by the Holiday Inn Four Seasons)	\$250.00
Customer Courtesy Card Incentives:	
Four Seasons Town Centre: (Chicklets sponsored by Popalops Candy Store )	\$285.37
Oak Hollow Mall: (Soft drinks sponsored by Chick-fil-A)	\$222.50
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Total Sponsorship Value:	\$757.87

\* Four Seasons Town Centre's collateral costs were higher because the center is larger and has more entrances.

## RESULTS

1. Neither Four Seasons Town Centre nor Oak Hollow Mall spent any funds on paid advertising.
2. The Share the Air campaign received \$64,170.40 in free publicity! This included 57.7 minutes of broadcast television coverage on all four local stations and stations in Raleigh and Charlotte valued at \$29,447.50. The campaign received more than 35 minutes of broadcast radio coverage on nine local radio stations valued at \$18,625. The campaign received 278 column inches of print coverage in three area daily newspapers as well as a local weekly newspaper valued at \$16,097.90.
3. Sales trends were positively impacted! Four Seasons Town Centre saw a comparable sales increase of 4.31% and Oak Hollow Mall saw a comparable sales increase of 5% for the month of February.
4. Both centers received numerous letters, emails, and calls from shoppers that were thrilled with the change. In addition, several Letters to the Editor applauding the malls' decision to become smoke free and favorable Editorials appeared in both the *Greensboro News & Record* and the *High Point Enterprise*.
5. The centers were able to implement the program with NO negative security situations. In fact, only 122 shoppers were approached at Four Seasons Town Centre and only 20 shoppers were approached at Oak Hollow Mall during the entire month of February.
6. Return on investment for this joint program was 93.1%. (Calculated by comparing total program costs to total publicity value.) Creative costs were reduced by 66% by sharing the campaign graphics.
7. The Share the Air campaign did increase community awareness of the change in policy at both centers. The centers received equal "air time" and were in every instance mentioned together in the media coverage.
8. Four Seasons Town Centre and Oak Hollow Mall set an example for other shopping centers! Both malls have been approached by other shopping centers asking for permission to duplicate the Share the Air program as part of their efforts to go smoke free.

## The Piedmont Triad



The Piedmont Triad is a nine county area of North Central North Carolina.

The tobacco industry has a \$6.5 billion dollar annual impact on the Triad, shown in the circled area above. The tobacco industry has a \$13 billion dollar annual impact on the state of North Carolina.



Collaterals for the campaign were designed with an “Audoban” feel, with green trees and the tagline “Share The Air” to be less intrusive than the typical “No Smoking Allowed” signage.



## SHARE THE AIR

Four Seasons Town Centre  
is a SMOKE FREE environment.

BRANCH  
CENTER



**DON'T SMOKE,  
HAVE A COKE!**

This card good for  
one FREE small  
soft drink at

**Chick-fil-A**

**Oak Hollow Mall  
location only.**

Expires 9/31/99

Security Officers approached smokers in a polite manner with the intent to inform them of the new smoke free policy. The Customer Courtesy Cards were an important tool in keeping these approaches friendly.





Door Decals were utilized on entrance doors at Four Seasons Town Centre and Oak Hollow Mall to remind shoppers of the policy change when they entered the buildings.



Posters in signholders throughout the malls reinforced the smoke free message.

Mr. Roger Pitney, Manager  
Four Seasons Town Center  
400 Four Seasons Town Center  
Greensboro, NC 27407

February 5, 1999

Dear Mr. Pitney,

I was very pleased to learn that our mall will now be smoke-free. I am certain that this was a difficult decision for the mall to make, but one that I believe that majority of the people in this community can support. It has been amazing and exciting to see the change in public attitudes toward smoking in recent years. I stopped smoking 10 years ago because in my field (health care) it became socially unacceptable to smoke. Years of nagging by my family, the fact that I had small children, seeing first hand the results of smoking on all body organs did not make me stop. Social pressure did.

As a nurse, I am concerned about the health and well-being of all people, smokers and nonsmokers alike. Awareness of the dangers of second-hand smoke and concern over providing a hazard-free workplace are making many industries rethink smoking policies and make changes such as you have made at Four Seasons Town Center. I support these changes and will show my support by increased patronage of your mall, since I can now do so in a much more comfortable environment. Thank you for the courage to act in a decisive manner on this public health concern.

Sincerely,



Linda Comer McIntosh, RN, MSN, MS

Four Seasons Towne Centre received many letters similar to the one above from shoppers who appreciated the new smoke free policy.



Alcohol and Drug Services of Guilford, Inc.

ADS East • 301 E. Washington Street, Suite 101 • Greensboro, NC 27401 • (336) 333-6860 • FAX (336) 275-1187

Mr. Kim Hamel  
Oak Hollow Mall  
921 Eastchester Drive, Ste.2320  
High Point, NC 27262

Dear Mr. Hamel,

I am writing to show my support for the decision for Oak Hollow Mall to go smoke-free. This announcement is such great news for so many people in our community.

As a Prevention Consultant at Alcohol and Drug Services, I am aware of the effects addictive substances have on our community. Smoking has long been seen as a "gateway" substance to other drug use. I work to educate young people about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs and am aware how adult actions can either reinforce this education or dilute it. Your decision to go smoke-free reinforces the facts about tobacco and shows integrity by having those fact match the action taken. I will be proud to use your mall as an example to the young people that I work with that the community does care about the environment in which they live.

Thank you so much for your decision to go smoke- free! I am looking forward to singing your praises and shopping at your mall.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Susan Bragg Brewer'.

Susan Bragg Brewer  
Prevention Consultant

REC'D FEB 01 1999



A member agency of the Greensboro and High Point United Ways  
A contract affiliate of the Guilford County Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Program

Oak Hollow Mall and Four Seasons Town Centre also received letters from several public health organizations in support of the new policy.

## Smoke-Free Policy Comments

"I was elated to read in the News & Record that Four Seasons was going "smokeless". Thank you for taking a stance to create a smokeless shopping environment. I appreciate your efforts to provide clean air for the shopping public."

- Anita C. Hege, via letter

"It was with great pleasure that I read in the News & Record that your mall will go smoke-free. I have avoided Four Seasons because of the very smoky atmosphere one has to travel through when going from one merchant to another. Thank you for finally making the mall a place where everyone can enjoy the shopping experience."

- Pam Levitin, via letter

"I would like to extend my gratitude for your recently announced decision to designate Oak Hollow Mall as a smoke free facility. Your new policy will allow citizens, including children and adults with breathing difficulties, to shop in comfort and safety."

- Daniel Zaccaro, via letter

"Congratulations on (finally!) adopting a No-Smoking policy. Frankly, it's about time! You have lost good customers who actually go to the mall to buy something because the smoke is unhealthy and taints the merchandise. Thank you... don't even go back."

- Johnathan Pierce, via email

"Thanks so much for making the mall No Smoking. We used to come over for lunch alot, but stopped because of all the smoke in the food court - yuck! We came over yesterday and it was great to enjoy lunch without the stinky smoke. We will be back."

- Christy Small, via email

"Thank you so much for taking the mall smoke free! The parents who shop in my store have been complaining about walking through the smoke since I got here. We have much happier customers and our sales have improved already."

- Jennifer Laughlin, Gymboree Manager, via voice mail

The majority of shoppers at both centers were pleased with the decision to make the malls smoke free. Many took the time to comment via letters, phone calls, email, and comments made to mall Management and the Customer Service Centers.

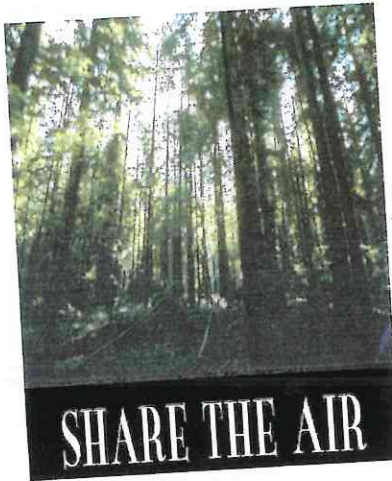


Twenty-two by twenty-eight campaign posters were utilized throughout Four Seasons Town Centre and Oak Hollow Mall.



Customer Courtesy Cards that matched the campaign graphics were utilized by Security Officers at both centers to create “customer friendly” approaches to patrons found smoking in the malls. The cards offered smokers a free pack of Chiclets at Four Seasons Town Centre and a free soft drink at Oak Hollow Mall.

# MEMO



To: Four Seasons Town Centre Merchants  
From: Roger Pitney, CSM  
Wendy Keck, CMD  
Subject: FOUR SEASONS TOWN CENTRE GOES  
SMOKE FREE ON FEBRUARY 1, 1999  
Date: January 18, 1999

Four Seasons Town Centre will become a smoke-free environment on February 1, 1999. Smoking will not be permitted anywhere in the common areas (anywhere not in the store spaces including service corridors, restrooms, and the Food Court ) of the mall as of that date. Four Seasons Town Centre is not alone in this decision. Both Oak Hollow Mall and Hanes Mall will also be going smoke free – Oak Hollow Mall on February 1st, Hanes Mall during First Quarter, 1999. We have been and will continue to work with both malls to coordinate this change of policy and will be sharing a graphics campaign with Oak Hollow Mall in an effort to familiarize area shoppers with the policy as quickly and easily as possible.

We believe it's important to inform merchants of this change before informing the general public. For your information a news release will be sent to area media this afternoon. In addition, the Marketing Directors from both Four Seasons Town Centre and Oak Hollow Mall will be holding a joint Media Interview Opportunity on January 21, 1999 to answer any questions the media may have about the smoke free policy. We ask for your help in referring all media inquiries about the smoke free policy to the Four Seasons Town Centre Marketing Director, Wendy Keck.

Please be aware that the smoke free policy also applies to mall employees. We would like to ask for your assistance in informing your employees of this policy and in making sure that your employees do not smoke in the service corridors, restrooms, or common areas of the mall if they care to smoke on their breaks. In addition, Project Assist has graciously agreed to offer "Thinking About Quitting" classes free to Four Seasons Town Centre employees. The classes will be held on Tuesday, February 2 at 3:30 pm and Thursday, February 4 at 8:30 am in the Amphitheater. The classes are FREE and offer information about quitting for those who are thinking about making this change. (Did you know that 50% of those that quit smoking do so because their workplace goes smoke free?)

The management of Four Seasons Town Centre is concerned about the health and welfare of our customers. Smoking in a confined area like a shopping mall is a nuisance to those who do not smoke and according to health care professionals, can be a health hazard. Smoking also creates an unsightly mess in our common areas and causes considerably more work for mall maintenance personnel.

Area statistics show  
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our help in  
ve any questions,

A special Merchant Packet, including memo, question and answer sheet, background information, and policy implementation guidelines were distributed to merchants at both centers to inform them of the policy change and ask for their help in implementing the policy.





Training meetings were conducted with the Security Officers at both malls to insure that officers were prepared to answer customer questions and enforce the policy in a “customer friendly” manner.



A joint Press Kit, which utilized the campaign graphics, was created and distributed to the media at a joint press conference announcing the policy change.

# Three area shopping malls are kicking the ol' habit

## ● Three cheers for smoke-free malls!

Snuff it out! That's the official word from three area shopping malls that are banning smoking. Four Seasons Town Centre in Greensboro and Oak Hollow Mall in High Point will forbid smoking in common areas beginning Feb 1. Hanes Mall in Winston-Salem will ban it beginning Monday.

More power to them. Smoke-free malls are healthier, cleaner and send a resounding message to impressionable teenagers who like to hang out at malls. The message? Smoking isn't cool at one of your favorite haunts and will not be tolerated.

The no-smoking policy is nothing radical. About 90 percent of America's malls already forbid smoking. If anything, the area malls are Johnny-come-latelies. Though North Carolina is a big tobacco-growing state, some Tar Heel malls clamped down on smoking in the early 1990s. Elsewhere in the nation, smoke-free malls began in the 1970s.

The bad news on the anti-smoking front is that young people increasingly are lighting up and getting hooked. In North Carolina, 36 percent of high school students smoke, compared to 26 percent of adults. Making smoking convenient hasn't helped the numbers go down.

Making smoking seem acceptable doesn't help either. When teenagers who smoke (and those who don't) see customers smoking in malls, it gives the impression that smoking is OK. The malls' smoke-free policy will now send the opposite signal.

When the anti-smoking movement began in America a decade or so ago, it was mostly an advertising campaign, with no teeth. But advertising can be a powerful force that sways public opinion, and many businesses, restaurants and public places restricted smoking to certain areas.

The next development in the anti-smoking campaign led to an outright ban on smoking inside most buildings. Smokers had to walk outside to puff, making the habit an ordeal for those who trudged to sidewalks and curbs for their fix. Most felt like red-faced pariahs as they clustered on curbs. Some even quit because smoking was just too inconvenient (or embarrassing).

Yet Four Seasons, Oak Hollow and Hanes malls have continued to permit smoking in some parts of their common areas. That will soon end. And maybe, just maybe, it will persuade both teenage and adult smokers that the ol' weed is bad behavior and it's time to kick the deadly habit.

After the press conference, and prior to the smoke free policy taking effect, an Editorial appeared in the Greensboro News & Record applauding the malls' decision to become smoke free.