

He's Bringing the Smokefree Message to the USA

R.J. Reynolds' grandson is a potent adversary against Big Tobacco

By John Richards

He's a grandson of tobacco titan R.J. Reynolds, but after smoking killed his father, Patrick Reynolds spoke out publicly in Congress — against the very cigarette industry his family helped build. He made the headlines that year, 1986, and was catapulted into a position of leadership in a fledgling tobacco-control movement.

As he worked on the nation's early smoking bans and cigarette tax hikes around the US, Reynolds became more and more dedicated to the tobacco-free cause.

Is he biting the hand that feeds him? In 1986, Reynolds told Congress, "If the hand that once fed me is the tobacco industry, that same hand has killed millions of people."

Is Patrick welcome at his tobacco family gatherings back in North Carolina? "Not really," he admitted to Perfect Smile.

"Doing what I did cost me. But it feels great to do the right thing. My brothers and I just agreed to disagree," he said.

These days Reynolds crisscrosses the nation, giving his assembly program to young people in middle schools and high schools and guest lecturing on college and hospital

campuses. In fact, hospitals are frequent sponsors of his talks, in part because the press coverage is strong and positive, and partly because this well-known advocate's program provides marketing staff with an excellent outreach to the local community.

Over the years, Patrick has presented his live talks to more than 150,000 students. His speaking fees are a main source of support for the non-profit group he founded in Los Angeles, the Foundation for a Smokefree America.

Jessica Gerdes, a school health consultant in DuPage County, Illinois, said, "Here in suburban Chicago, three hospitals joined together with the health department to co-sponsor this excellent community outreach. Hospital marketing executives were thrilled with the positive front-page news coverage. His evening presentation for community members was also a great success."

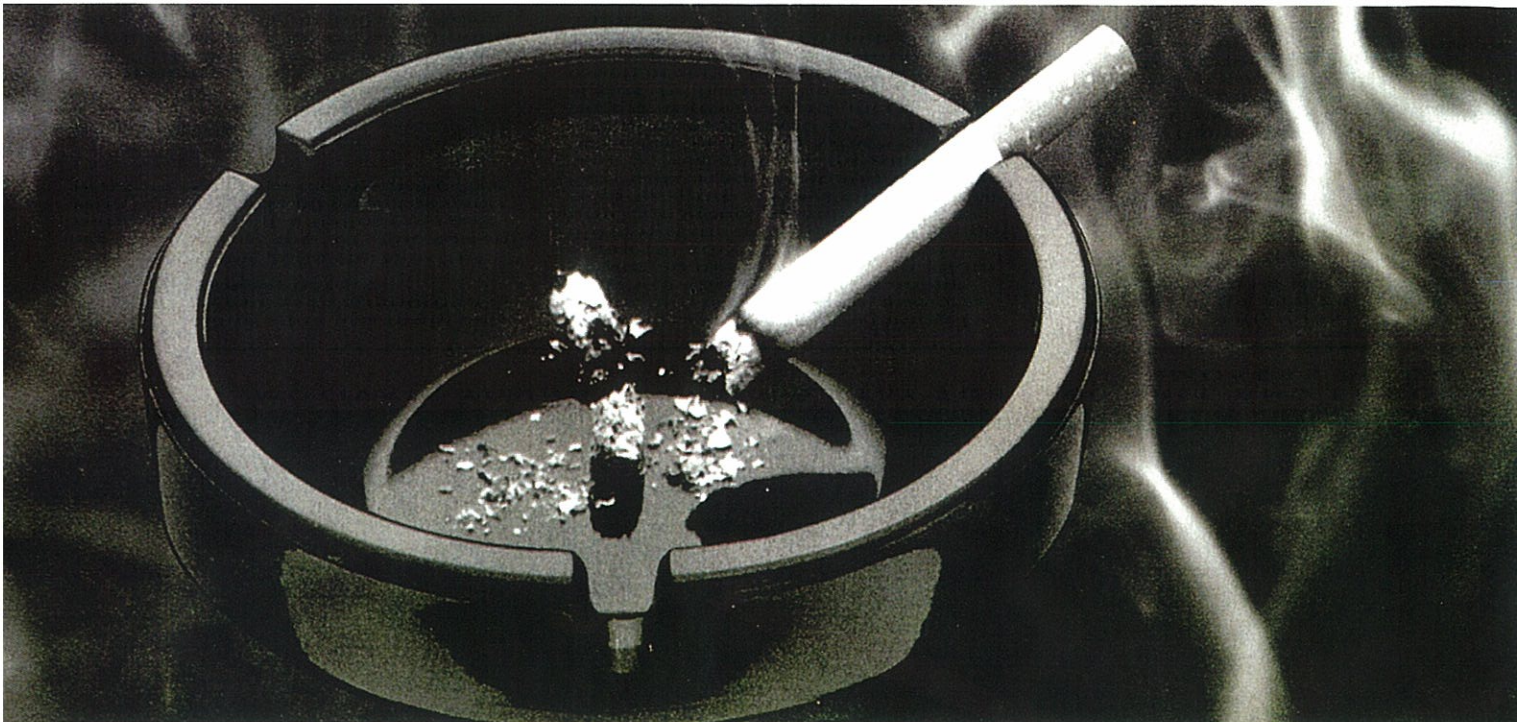
Reynolds says he'd like to do more advocacy and spend less time fundraising in the future — so he's hoping to raise an endowment for the Foundation for a Smokefree America.

"With a sufficient endowment, I'll

spend time going on tour in other countries. I'd like to meet with the health minister in every nation and speak to kids at schools with the press invited to both. The tobacco-free message needs to be heard more in Asia, the Middle East and Africa. I think we could get the support of the World Health Organization and health ministries, too, in putting a tour together. We have the chance to make a real difference in Europe, as well," says Reynolds.

His 501c3 group's mission is to motivate young people to stay tobacco free and empower smokers to quit. Smokefree America has a large presence on the Web. Thanks to a substantial in-kind grant from Google, thousands of would-be quitters easily find Smokefree America's free quitting tips daily. And thousands of teens log on, too; all the major search engines rank Smokefree America's Web sites, www.Anti-smoking.org and www.Tobaccofree.org, among their top results for "anti-smoking" and "anti-tobacco." "We're very proud of our Web outreach," says Reynolds.

In his free time, Patrick is a mountain biker and volunteers to work with local tobacco-free advocates to help educate their communities



“...MOTIVATE YOUNG PEOPLE TO STAY TOBACCO FREE AND EMPOWER SMOKERS TO QUIT.”

about pending state assembly bills or ballot measures to strengthen existing smoking bans.

Just before the 2006 election, he went on a press tour of Ohio to campaign for Issue 5, a ballot measure which later made all Ohio bars and restaurants 100percent smoke free.

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In February 2008, two Ohio hospitals, Fisher-Titus in Norwalk and Samaritan Hospital in Ashland, joined forces to sponsor six talks by Reynolds to youth at several schools. For some of his talks, students were bussed in from schools in surrounding counties.

In 2006, Smokefree America released an updated edition of “The Truth About Tobacco,” an acclaimed DVD of Patrick’s live talk for youth.

Illustrated with award-winning TV spots, film clips and anti-smoking graphics, the video sends an empowering message to youth about cigarette advertising, smoking in films and the addictiveness of nicotine. The video, as well as his live talks to youth, always close with Mr. Reynolds’ unique initiation for teens and his inspirational message of hope for the future, which he feels is especially needed by youth in a time of terrorism and uncertainty about the future. The video has won much acclaim from educators and has been purchased by more than 10,000 schools and health departments.

In late 2003, former US Surgeon General C. Everett Koop commented, “Patrick Reynolds is one of the nation’s most influential advocates of a smoke-free America. His testimony is invaluable to our society.”

Mr. Reynolds testified for the second time before Congress in 1987,

joining the many voices who helped bring about the present ban of smoking on all US domestic flights.

Since 1986, Mr. Reynolds has spoken before dozens of municipal and state legislatures in support of proposed smoking ordinances which have become law. Over the years, he has campaigned for numerous state cigarette tax increases, vending machine bans, 100 percent smoking bans and laws to limit youth access to tobacco at the point of sale. He also approached several members of the US Congress about the aggressive advertising of US brands in the Third World and Asia.

Recently, he has called for governors and state legislators to maintain or increase teen tobacco prevention spending; only two states meet the CDC recommended minimum. Reynolds points out, “When tobacco prevention programs are adequately funded for five years or more, states such as Florida have seen a 50





PATRICK REYNOLDS AND SURGEON GENERAL C. EVERETT KOOP, IN 2003

in the middle school smoking rate and a 35 percent cut in high school smoking. On the other hand, states with poorly-funded programs have not seen this kind of decrease in the youth smoking rate.”

In 1989, Little, Brown and Company published a colorful book about the R.J. Reynolds family which Patrick co-authored, *The Gilded Leaf*, which spans three generations of the family. In 2007, he married for the

second time, to Alexandra Olympios in Los Angeles.

Patrick Reynolds’ advocacy work, motivational talks to youth and appearances in the national press have made him a well-known and respected champion of a smoke-free society. This Reynolds has helped remind millions of people of the dangers of smoking – and he wants to come to your city and speak to kids in schools or at a local college. ☎

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