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## **Surgeon General 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Smoking Report Links Hollywood to Youth Deaths**

**Removing smoking from youth rated movies can save  
hundreds of thousands of lives every year**

January 27, 2014, OAKLAND, CALIF, Today's release of the 50th anniversary of the first Surgeon General's report on smoking called on Hollywood movie studios to eliminate images of smoking from youth rated movies because doing so, "could have a significant effect on preventing youth from becoming tobacco users." Implementing this policy by modernizing the movie ratings system to give these films an R rating would, according to the report, reduce youth smoking by 18% and reduce smoking deaths significantly.

The landmark report released in January 1964 by the ninth Surgeon General, Dr. Luther Terry, 50 years ago, laid the foundation for tobacco control efforts in the U.S. Through the efforts of tobacco control professionals, advocates and researchers the work has continued to move forward with clean indoor air laws, taxes that increased the price of tobacco products, warning labels, and the elimination of TV advertising. "Thanks to the television broadcast ad ban, movies remain the most important mass media channel addicting kids to cigarettes," according to Andrew Behar, CEO of As You Sow, an environmental advocacy organization based in Oakland California.

For over ten years, shareholder advocates including the environmental advocacy organization As You Sow, Father Michael Crosby, a Capuchin Franciscan based in Milwaukee, and Cathy Rowan Director of Socially Responsible Investments for CHE Trinity Health and other faith-based members of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility have been pressing the major media corporations that own the Hollywood studios to get smoking out of their youth rated movies. They have filed shareholder resolutions and engaged with Time-Warner, Viacom, FOX, Sony, Comcast, and Disney resulting in disclosure of public policies by each studio and initially significant reduction in the incidents of smoking in youth rated movies. However, according to the Surgeon General, "Portrayals of tobacco use in U.S. films appears to have rebounded upward in the past 2 years. In 2012, youth were exposed to an estimated 14.9 billion in-theater tobacco-use impressions in youth rated films."

According to Behar, "In 2012 the Surgeon General concluded that onscreen smoking has a direct causal link to youths starting to smoke and recommend an R rating for those films. The media companies control the rating system through the MPAA and they should act on the Surgeon General's call for an R rating so that they will stop addicting kids to tobacco and to creating risks for their shareholders.

Father Michael Crosby added that, "Even with the overall reductions in on-screen smoking, as faith-based shareholders concerned about peoples' health, we know there are still hundreds of incidents of smoking in many PG and PG-13 rated movies. Data has shown these almost countless impressions to young people can initiate a lifelong addiction leading to heart disease, pulmonary problems, and cancer."



Cathy Rowan of CHE Trinity Health stated, “We have always emphasized in our shareholder dialogues with the major movie studios that depicting tobacco in movies is a public health issue. The studios have responded with policies and practices, but the fact that children and youth remain exposed to smoking indicates that the best solution is to act on the Surgeon General’s call.”

Stanton Glantz, PhD, Professor of Medicine, American Legacy Foundation Distinguished Professor of Tobacco Control at the University of California San Francisco and director of the Smoke Free Movies campaign said, “The impact of getting smoking out of youth rated films will be huge in terms of public health benefit eventually reducing smoking deaths by 18% every year. The movie industry must take this seriously and realize that their actions to remove all smoking from youth rated moving is the most rapid and inexpensive way to solve this problem that will be felt by kids in the US and as these films are exported around the world, globally.”

The release of today’s report is a call to action for major media companies to take responsibility for the images in their film that lead to smoking initiation and a lifetime of addiction and compromised health for their youngest and most impressionable customers.

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**As You Sow** is a nonprofit organization that promotes environmental and social corporate responsibility through shareholder advocacy, coalition building, and innovative legal strategies. For more information visit [www.asyousow.org](http://www.asyousow.org).