

Cabarrus parks outlaw tobacco, also working on a policy requiring healthy food in park vending machines.

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Jairo Angeles loves taking his wife, Lyneth, and their nearly 1-year-old daughter, Ailine, to Frank Liske Park on Stough Road in Concord.

"We come here because of the healthy air," Angeles, 28, of Concord said.

The last thing he'd want is someone smoking near them, he said.

Angeles said he's happy that Cabarrus County has banned all tobacco products from its parks through an ordinance that took effect Friday.

Having someone smoke near his daughter wouldn't be good for her at all, Angeles said. "It wouldn't be good for me," he said.

County officials said the ban is intended to free parks of harmful second-hand smoke and exposure to discarded cigarettes and other tobacco products, which children and pets can find on the ground.

Most of the 250 cigarette butts discovered during a recent litter cleanup at Frank Liske Park were near children's playgrounds, Cabarrus County Parks Director Londa Strong said.

The ban includes cigars, smoking tobacco, snuff, chewing tobacco and other forms of tobacco.

Someone who refuses to extinguish a cigarette or other tobacco product when asked to by a parks worker risks a \$50 citation.

Policies governing smoking in public parks vary across the region.

Mooresville banned smoking in its parks last fall, Mooresville Recreation Director Wanda McKenzie said.

Smokers can still light up in Mecklenburg County-run parks, a spokesman said. Smoking also is allowed in Huntersville parks, said Huntersville Parks and Recreation Director Michael Jaycocks.

Cindy England of Harrisburg said she, too, is glad smoking is no longer allowed in Cabarrus County parks.

"I wouldn't like people smoking around me," England, 48, said as she guided her granddaughter, Cayla England, 2, on a swing at Frank Liske Park last week. "I like to come to a clean park, a clear park."

Cabarrus County, meanwhile, is working to develop a policy that would require half of all snacks and beverages in its parks' vending machines and concession stands to be healthy.

Healthy foods have no more than 200 calories and no more than 30 percent calories from fat, except for nuts and seeds, county officials said. Healthy foods have no trans fats and get no more than 35 percent of their total weight from sugar and caloric sweeteners. They have less than 360 milligrams of sodium per serving.

Healthy beverage options include water, nonfat or 1 percent-fat milk, diet soft drinks and 100 percent fruit or vegetable juices with no added sugars, artificial flavors or colors.

The county's parks department received a grant from the Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation to buy two refrigerated display coolers for the concession stands at Frank Liske Park and Camp T.N. Spencer Park to provide the healthier food options.

Vending machines at those parks and at North Cabarrus Park also would have to meet the 50 percent healthy requirement.

The county is still working on the policy, Strong said last week.

Read more: <http://www.charlotteobserver.com/2011/07/03/2419529/cabarrus-parks-outlaw-tobacco.html#ixzz1SgFY0f8P>