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The Item

of Millburn and Short Hills

Smoke free
Township doctor stands up
against cigarette smoke
pollution. See A10

Township doctor leads the fight against cigarette smoking in state

By Andrea Hughes
of The Item

Township resident Dr. Fred M. Jacobs refuses to stop standing up against the hazards of cigarette smoke pollution.

"Some people think we've won this war, but it's just beginning," Jacobs said last week.

Named the newest president of the board of trustees of the New Jersey Group against Smoke Pollution, also known as NJ GASP, he's in a position to make change happen.

Jacobs was the keynote speaker at this year's annual meeting, held at the Hilton Short Hills Hilton on Sept. 5.

Executive director Karen Blumenfeld, a township resident, said 100 people attended - a record number for the group.

At the event, Jacobs received the C. Everett Coop and John D. Slayd Award for his efforts in preventing secondhand smoke in the state's

public places.

Jacobs has been a pulmonary physician since the early 1960s. He also served as the commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services.

Jacobs is known for his help in the passage of the state's Smoke-Free Air Act in 2006.

Until the Smoke-Free Air Act, there was a statewide preemption against local towns prohibiting smoking in their restaurants and other public indoor spaces.

"I got out there and mentioned it in every speech in every venue," Jacobs said. He praised Sen. Richard Codey's efforts and said that there was much help from the state legislature.

Thanks to the Smoke-Free Air Act, New Jerseyans are surprised when they go to restaurants with smoking sections in other states, Jacobs remarked.

The New Jersey Group Against Smoke Pollution also led the push for the Smokefree College Residential Housing Law. The law

prohibits smoking in student dormitories in both public and private colleges and universities.

Blumenfeld, who graduated from Millburn High School in 1980, visited her alma mater of Drew University in August of 2005 to witness Codey's signing of the bill to prohibit smoking in dormitories. Jacobs was also in attendance.

The signing took place after a dorm fire was caused by lighter fluid in February of the same year.

This fall will see other steps being taken across the state to curb smoke pollution.

As of Oct. 15, smoking will be banned on the casino floors of Atlantic City, thanks to an ordinance passed by the city.

Jacobs explained concern for casino workers was a major motivation for getting the ordinance passed. He said working an eight-hour shift in a smoking environment is equivalent to smoking 16 cigarettes.

Public health is the major concern in this situation, Jacobs said. "The economics will be handled in some other way," he added.

Jacobs currently works as the executive vice president and director of the Saint Barnabas Quality Institute.

The New Jersey Group against Smoke Pollution's efforts extend beyond the state and even the

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country.

Blumenfeld is advising the Eastern European Gaming Summit in Bulgaria on how to market smoke-free casinos. She has been published twice in the Gaming Industry Observer.

"Tobacco is a global epidemic," she said.

Blumenfeld, who became executive director in the spring, directs

the organization's policy and legal research center.

Having suffered from asthma in her childhood, she focuses on protecting children in apartments and cars from secondhand smoke.

She is an advocate of educating the public on the need for increased funding on tobacco smoke control.

For more information on the organization, call its office at 908-273-9368 or visit www.njgasp.org.