



## **We Card's response to an American Journal of Public Health article**

### **American Journal of Public Health article:**

*The "We Card" Program: Tobacco Industry "Youth Smoking Prevention" as Industry Self-Preservation*

"Published online ahead of print May 13, 2010."

### **"WE CARD" PROGRAM RESPONDS**

The recent article, *The "We Card" Program: Tobacco Industry "Youth Smoking Prevention" as Industry Self-Preservation*, provides an incomplete, mischaracterized and misleading analysis of the *We Card* program, its origin and its purpose.

Little fact verification was done to corroborate the authors' conclusions, particularly as this relates to *We Card* Program efficacy. *We Card* was not contacted nor were retailers, retail trade associations or others who know the program first-hand. The authors make claims that the *We Card* Program is ineffective without evaluating numerous internal and external research studies or retailer and other stakeholder experiences.

Contrary to the article's conclusions, retailers' demonstrative actions in preventing tobacco sales to minors since *We Card's* inception have paralleled the significant decline in the national weighted average retail violation rate of tobacco sales to minors from 40.1% in 1997 to 10.9% in 2009 – as reported by the federal government's Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Center for Substance Abuse and Prevention (as measured by checks of retail stores using minors' attempts to purchase tobacco.)

Hundreds of thousands of the nation's retailers use the *We Card* training curriculum, age calculation tools and educational materials to train and equip their store managers and employees to prevent tobacco sales to minors. Many present-day training programs and guidance documents find their roots in the *We Card* training program curriculum.

National organizations representing convenience, grocer and wholesale retail channels serve as the *We Card* Program's Board of Directors, guiding its training and educational services for retailers, keeping programs updated and promoting *We Card's* availability to the retail community. Nearly 250 state level retail trade associations serve as vital communications and educational links to thousands of retailers across the country while numerous state enforcement agencies and community resource partners have used the *We Card* program to support training and educational efforts. The broad support the *We Card* Program has gained, its effective training programs and retailer use of these programs along with the steady decline in youth access to tobacco at the retail sales counter are success stories worthy of commendation, not denigration.