



February 8, 2008

More good news from the Crain's and AP wire

Suburban grocery chain to stop selling cigarettes.

DeCicco Markets in suburban New York said it will no longer offer tobacco products, becoming the second New York grocer to cease cigarette sales.

A group of suburban New York grocery stores said Friday that it would no longer sell cigarettes, becoming the second local chain to sacrifice tobacco-related profits for health reasons. John DeCicco Jr., vice president of operations at DeCicco Markets, said the grocer's locations in Pelham, Bronxville, Scarsdale, New York and Jefferson Valley are selling off their existing inventory and will be tobacco-free by April. "We want to try to promote health as much as possible," Mr. DeCicco said. "It's a moral decision as well in that we don't want to promote underage smoking."

Though he said the family-owned chain will likely lose several thousand dollars a week in profit, its newest store, which opened in Ardsley last year, has never sold cigarettes and continues to be financially stable. Just last month, Rochester-based Wegmans Food Markets Inc., which has 71 stores in New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Virginia and Maryland, said it would stop selling tobacco products. That ban will take effect next week. The company also cited the role smoking plays in health. If it catches on in other chain stores, abstaining from cigarette sales could take a toll on some bottom lines. Tobacco and related accessories, such as lighters, accounted for \$5.4 billion in supermarket sales nationally in 2006, according to Progressive Grocer magazine.

A report released Thursday by Mayor Michael Bloomberg and the World Health Organization estimated that tobacco could be responsible for up to a billion deaths during the 21st century, particularly as cigarette sales soar in poorer countries. Mr. Bloomberg and the W.H.O suggested a six-tiered program aimed at fighting the tobacco industry's influence. Nicknamed Mpower, the program would include raising cigarette taxes, prohibiting smoking in public places, enforcing laws against giving or advertising tobacco to children, monitoring tobacco use, warning people about its dangers and offering smokers free or subsidized help in trying to quit.

Last year, the mayor proposed raising the city's cigarette tax, which currently stands at \$1.50 per pack, to \$2, saying the increase would reduce smoking and generate an additional \$20 million in tax revenue that would be used to expand anti-smoking public health efforts.