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Region's first smokefree rental housing study shows growing demand for smokefree properties

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Multnomah County Health Department, in partnership with the American Lung Association of Oregon and Clark County Public Health, is pleased to announce the results of the region's first smokefree rental housing study, which indicates strong consumer demand for smokefree properties. Of the 400 renters surveyed in Multnomah, Washington, Clackamas and Clark Counties, an overwhelming 75 percent indicated that "other things being equal" they would choose to live in smokefree multi-family housing.

In addition to showing a large consumer demand for smokefree housing, the study revealed that 52 percent of renters would pay extra to live in a smokefree community. It was also determined that very few renters, only 19 percent, are daily smokers and that eight out of 10 renters do not allow smoking inside. Also among the study's findings was that 42 percent of renters would not be comfortable renting where neighboring tenants smoke.

"Eight out of 10 survey respondents agreed that daily exposure to even small amounts of secondhand smoke is a serious health risk," said Kylie Meiner, tobacco prevention coordinator for the Multnomah County Health Department. "Scientific evidence indicates there is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke, which contains more than 50 cancer-causing chemicals such as lead, arsenic and formaldehyde."

Meiner noted that more area property owners would likely prohibit smoking if they understood it was within their legal right and knew the decision would be supported. The tenant study, in fact, showed that very few tenants take issue with the concept of landlords prohibiting tenants from smoking in their own homes, while most (73 percent) endorse it.

Residents interested in finding smokefree rental housing in the greater Portland area can use a new online tool at www.housingconnections.org/smokefree.cfm which searches for smokefree properties that allow smoking by location, unit size, and rent. For those living in SW Washington, a new smokefree rental housing guide is available through Clark County Public Health at (360) 397-8000, ext. 7378.

The Portland Metro-Area Smokefree Housing Project is a project of the American Lung Association of Oregon, Multnomah County Health Department and Clark County Public Health.