

Smoking

Continued from Page 1

said. "I thought I was never going to be happy again. I am so fidgety with my hands."

Many smokers believe the crack-down on tobacco companies and price increase won't discourage young smokers from lighting up.

"I don't think that will stop kids," Hannon said. "Making them less accessible makes it more exciting for them."

At 7-Eleven on 13th Avenue and Alder Street, an employee said most people understand the price increase. Major brands now cost \$3.70, and the only price that stayed fixed was \$3.60 for American Spirit cigarettes.

Sue McGuire, who works at Alder Street Market on the corner of 11th Avenue and Alder Street, plans to quit smoking in a week because of the increase. The price of major brands has increased to \$3.50 at Alder Street Market.

"It's going to be an expensive habit," McGuire said.

Most of her customers knew about the increase because it had been mentioned so much in the media, she said.

"They understand the increase is not on my end," she said. "I didn't make the raise. I'm paying \$4.50 more a carton, and it adds up when you buy a 100 cartons a month."

There may be another price increase Jan. 1, 1999, which could raise the price of cigarettes to more than \$4.

"It's a ploy to conform society to the way some people in power want us to be," said student Nick Deetz, a Marlboro Lights smoker for the past four years. He thinks the price hikes harken back to alcohol prohibition in the 1920s.

"They can make it harder for people to smoke, but they can't stop people from smoking," Deetz said.

He said image is part of the problem with youth smoking. As long as the image of smoking is popular and considered cool, people will continue to smoke.

"They're treating smokers like children, by saying we know what's best for you and making that decision," Deetz said.

Some smokers believe the tobacco company price hikes are unfair.

"It takes advantage of people who smoke to pay for what they're [tobacco companies] getting sued for," McGuire said.

Even some student nonsmokers said they would rather see the 45 cent increase go directly to the government.

"These big companies are doing it to cover themselves," said Lana Byal, a biology major. "I think its ridiculous how they [tobacco

companies] try to make themselves out to seem like they're trying to help people quit smoking."

Byal and nonsmoker Katie Bennett, a pre-journalism major, said they worry that tobacco companies will shift their emphasis to targeting smokers in third world countries.

They said they would like to see more direct government regulation.

"They should determine how much it costs to actually make a cigarette and regulate how much companies can actually charge," Byal said. "Aside from that, the rest of the money could go toward health benefits and deterrent."

Some worry the price increase is a regressive tax that will really hurt low-income smokers the most.

"If you have to choose between nutritious food for your family or a pack of cigarettes, you're going to choose food," said nonsmoker Jessica Langer, a sociology major. "The increase is going to make smoking more of a luxury."

But even many nonsmokers agree smoking is a part of the U.S. culture.

"It's engraved into us that it's our right to smoke, and then it turns into a moral debate," Byal said. "With cigarettes it's not a moral issue, it's a health issue."

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