

PART SEVEN OF SEVEN

CANCER

A CODE RED PROJECT



Leukemia sufferer Steve Rudaniecki at Central Park (former site of a roofing-tar firm) across from his home; he says a suspicious rivulet of black ooze would run through the neighbourhood.

Hamilton's proximity to the Six Nations reserve where cheap, unregulated cigarettes are easily available isn't helping. About half the city's smokers say they consume contraband smokes.

Smoker continued from // BA9

Nearly 45 per cent of households in the L8L postal codes — covering the urban core between James and Ottawa streets from Main Street to the waterfront — had at least one smoker in the home.

In Ancaster's L9K postal codes, just 11 per cent of households reported at least one smoker in the home.

Based on data from the 2006 census, the median family income in the L8L postal code area was less than \$45,000 a year. In L9K, the median family income was over \$110,000 a year.

Overall, 34 per cent of house-

holds in the lower part of the former City of Hamilton had at least one smoker compared to 15 per cent in Ancaster, Dundas, Flamborough and Westdale.

"The presence of a smoker in a home increases exponentially the odds of children and youth actually taking up smoking themselves," said Kevin McDonald, manager of the tobacco control program for Hamilton's public health unit. "The role-model aspect, the normalcy of smoking — that will really be an indicator of future use."

Smoking rates across the country declined steadily for decades, McDonald said, but the decreases have now started to flatten out.

"Now you're into the real hardening group of smokers," said McDonald. "That's the really challenging group."

"They will freely admit that they want to quit and they wish they'd never started but their ability to successfully stop is challenged, either because they don't have the resources or the right supports."

Hamilton's proximity to the Six Nations reserve, where cheap unregulated cigarettes are easily available, isn't helping. About half of the city's smokers say they consume contraband smokes.

The city conducted a survey of the location of cigarette vendors in Hamilton and discov-

ered that they are disproportionately concentrated in the lower-inner city.

"Every school in the city has a minimum of five vendors within a one-kilometre radius," said McDonald. "Some of these areas have over 50."

"So the product is highly normalized in certain parts of the city and highly accessible."

McDonald also noted that programs to stop people from smoking can't have a one-size-fits-all message. For some, emphasizing the health impacts works best. For others, the economic toll of smoking might be more effective.

"The challenge is how do you get to those high-risk populations so that they're not disproportionately affected," he added.

SCRATCH DEEP enough and everyone has a cancer story to tell, whether it's related to a

loved one, a friend or a co-worker. That's a powerful testament to the fear that cancer conjures up from some dark place within us.

HERE'S MY STORY.

Last year, at the age of 25, my younger daughter was screened for one of the breast cancer genes because there's a family history of the marker for the disease.

The day the results were in, she went by herself to the Juravinski centre to hear the news. She didn't want anyone to be there.

When she was done, she called me from her car in the parking lot to tell me that she was indeed a carrier of the gene.

It means she has a 60 per cent chance of developing breast cancer at some point in her lifetime. Surely that's not right, I stammered.

Mistake continues // BA11



Cancer patient Janice McFadyen at Bob Kemp Hospice with daughter Rachel. She was given five weeks to live and on Oct. 29 had made it to 13. 'I'm not sure what pulled me through.'

PHOTOS BY JOHN RENNISON, THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR