



**Store owner won't sell cigarettes
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The Smokefree Coalition is congratulating an Okere Falls store owner who refuses to sell cigarettes. Retailer Sarah Uhl of Okere Falls Store won't sell a product that is both expensive and lethal.

Coalition Director Mark Peck says he is thrilled to find someone who is adamant about putting health before profits and that it has restored his faith in human nature.

"Retailers don't do badly out of cigarette sales - making about \$1.20 for each pack they sell. I think what Sarah is doing is absolutely marvellous," he said.

Ms Uhl has no idea what impact the smokefree policy has had on the store's revenue, and she says she doesn't care.

"A lot of the people around here don't have a lot of money, and selling cigarettes just doesn't seem the right thing to do.

"We're a community store, seeking to add something positive to our environment, and we can't see how smoking has anything to do with that," she said.

Customer reaction hasn't been all that negative. "Actually, most people are pretty cruisy about it."

This is despite the fact that people wanting cigarettes would have to drive back around the lake to Rotorua, or head out another 20kms north to Paengaroa where a small dairy is sometimes open.

Okere Falls Store sells a wide range of products including groceries, fresh produce, gourmet food, imported wines, and "great coffee".

"With all that, people don't really need cigarettes," Ms Uhl said.

Okere Falls is a small settlement on the shore of Lake Rotoiti, and is a popular destination for fishing and water sports enthusiasts. Okere Falls Store had been shut for two years and was re-opened in August 2005 under its present new management. The decision not to sell tobacco products was made before the store re-opened.

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