

## **Girl Scouts Clean Up Litter Generated by Smokers**

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Lacey Park in Hanford is free of empty beer cans and cigarette butts — thanks to the efforts of a group of local Girl Scouts.

Half a dozen members of Junior and Brownie troops in Hanford came out to the neighborhood park on Irwin Street Friday afternoon, picking up litter generated by smokers as well as other miscellaneous trash around the recreation facility frequented by youth.

The event was part of an effort spearheaded by the Kings County Tobacco Control program to analyze tobacco use around the community.

“We’re interested in seeing if there is a big tobacco litter problem at the park,” said Carmen Gutierrez, health educator with the county tobacco control.

Gutierrez said the state health and safety code prohibits smoking within 25 feet of any child play area at parks.

“Most of the cigarette butts are found over the 25-foot mark, but there are some found within the area,” she said. “We’re looking to see if there’s a big problem, because other cities are adopting ordinances for smoke-free parks. We want to see what the trend is here.”

With Gopher tool in hand, Girl Scouts fanned out across the park. Just 15 minutes into the cleanup, the girls had found a few dozen cigarette butts.

Girl Scout leader Wendy Miguel said the event was important for the young girls’ involvement in the community. “I think it’s one of the best things you can show your kids to do. That’s why I put my kids into the Girl Scouts to begin with, so they could do community service projects,” Miguel said. “It’s important that they know their community and they have a sense of what’s going on. Otherwise, they don’t care about it.”  
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