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Group proves it's a champ

Muskogee Against Tobacco (MAT) received a well-earned award for its efforts to make Muskogee parks smoke-free.

The group was honored by the statewide health initiative and coalition, Turning Point.

MAT earned a Community Champions award.

Our parks are now smoke-free because of Mat's efforts.

Our children can play in city parks without being exposed to second-hand smoke.

"We were successful, and that's really great, especially for our kids," MAT member Ched Wetz said. "I'm excited to have been part of that."

With the help of Muskogee High School's Students Working Against Tobacco, Honor Heights Park is now cigarette butt free, too.

"It feels great to see progress made step by step and to see something done," said SWAT President Derra Walker. "It's awesome to know that kids won't be exposed to smoking like this."

The groups also helped clean up Civitan and Spaulding parks.

"It's kind of like, we've started with tobacco-free parks, and now in the bigger picture we might have tobacco-free restaurants and so on," Walker said. "It makes you feel like you're part of something bigger than yourself, and it's one more step toward making our lives better."

MAT's efforts are highlighted by the award and by signs in city parks stating, "YOUNG LUNGS AT PLAY."

Groups such as MAT and SWAT make a real difference in our community and deserve the recognition that comes with the Community Champions award.

The efforts of members of both groups prove there are good people willing to work hard to make our community a safer, better place to live.

We congratulate MAT on its award and thank SWAT for its contributions.