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# Shakey's going smoke-free

By Patrick Crowley • pcrowley@nky.com • March 13, 2009

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**FLORENCE** – Shakey's Pub and Grub has made a lot of effort trying to appeal to those who smoke and those who don't.

Advertisement The restaurant and bar that sits along U.S. 42 in the heart of Florence offers smoking and non-smoking sections. Owner Shakey Shaw has spent more than \$30,000 on a ventilation system that keeps the air mostly free of smoke and haze.

But on April 1, Shakey's is going smoke-free. That's no April Fool's joke.

Concerned that he is losing customers who want to eat, drink and watch sports in a smoke-free environment, Shaw is making what he knows is a difficult decision that will alienate and even drive off some long time customers.

"I'm getting a lot of heat from the non-smokers," Shaw said Thursday night as he sipped on a Bud Light while seated near the restaurant's front door. "A lot of people don't want to be around cigarette smoke. I know I'm taking a chance. But I've made the decision, and it's what I'm going to do."

Customers will still be able to smoke on Shakey's outdoor patio, which opens in April, but smoking will be off limits in the dining room and bar.

Shaw said he made the decision shortly after the first of the year, after he turned away several Christmas parties.

"Even though we have a non-smoking section, people still didn't want to book their parties or come in," he said. "I watched a lot of business leave. I can't keep doing that. And even now, I have a lot of customers on me to do it."

Shaw's decision comes as a coalition of health organizations dubbed Northern Kentucky Action is pushing Boone, Kenton and Campbell counties to adopt ordinances banning smoking in most public places, including restaurants and bars.

A disagreement over exemptions for some bars and other locations has stalled the movement, though the group is using Shaw's decision to push its cause.

Northern Kentucky Action has dropped off fliers at Shakey's that encourage customers to get involved by logging on to its Web site.

"Let your server know you appreciate Shakey's making your health a priority," read the fliers, which Shaw is considering putting on tables when the ban starts. "Why is Northern Kentucky not doing the same?"

The city of Florence has voted to oppose the smoke-free workplace ordinance the counties are contemplating.

"We feel that the businesses in Florence should make that decision," Florence Councilman Ted Bushelman said Thursday night after eating dinner at Shakey's, a favorite haunt of Boone County's political crowd. "It shouldn't be a government decision it should be a local government decision."



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**Ron Bradley, of Independence, smokes a cigarette at the bar at Shakey's Pub and Grub, Florence. Owner Shakey Shaw is making the entire bar/restaurant a no smoking establishment 4/1/09. Bradley said he will still eat at Shakey's but will go elsewhere if just wants to have a beer. He said he and his friends no longer go to Ohio because of the smoking ban. "It should be up to the bar owner, not the government," he said.**

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Ken Moellman, chairman of the Libertarian Party of Kentucky, has helped lead the opposition to the smoking law. Moellman points to the Web site of the Northern Kentucky Health Department – a member of Northern Kentucky Action – and a page that shows well over a hundred local restaurants that have gone smoke-free.

"Shakey's decision, also made by two-thirds of other restaurants in the area, to go smoke-free shows that we don't need to legislate a smoking ban," Moellman said. "The free market is working. Let it work."

Few places like Shakey's – a combination restaurant, sports bar and neighborhood tavern – have made the decision to not allow smoking. Most are chain family-style restaurant and fast-food franchises. Shakey's will still have plenty of competitors, some just blocks away, that allow smoking.

On Thursday night the smoking section of the restaurant was nearly full and a group of young people smoked as they watched college basketball.

Loyal customers say that ultimately they don't expect Shakey's business to be hurt too badly because of Shaw, a well-liked and gregarious bar keep who knows almost everyone who walks in the door, always has a story to tell and knows how to make customers feel like they are the most important people in the place.

One long-time customer pointed out that when a new bar recently opened nearby in Florence, Shaw sent the new owner flowers.

Even though she smokes, Colleen Bowman believes the new policy is a smart idea. She intends to keep coming back.

"I would still rather come here and go outside to smoke," Bowman said. "I know it's not healthy, and I don't like the smell of it in a bar even though I do it. It might hurt this business a little at first, but I think the people that love Shakey will continue to come in here."

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**dubbledxu** wrote:

Shakey's is making the correct move in getting ahead of the smoking ban that will eventually be put in place. It is a natural progression that will eventually make its way across the country. NKY needs more forward thinking initiatives to get younger people to move south of the river. As more people desire to live in NKY, the more everyone's homes will appreciate. The days of NKY being a "good ole boys" Kentucky need to be behind us. NKY needs to catch up to Lexington and Louisville and go entirely smoke free. (and yes, i am a smoker trying like h to quit)

3/17/2009 12:03:53 PM

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**dubbledxu** wrote:

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3/17/2009 11:20:51 AM

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**Bigmkat** wrote:

I understand I just hate to see him cave in to the smoke police. No offense but if you ever went to shakey's they had a nice smoke free room that was mostly empty. The world is changing and while I don't mind fighting for the little guy it's kind of tough when the little guy is big tobacco or people who scientifically have their minds warped by an addiction. Shakey doesn't smoke or at least I have never seen him smoke, but the man does sooooo much for this town. I hope this don't hurt you to bad. Good luck!

3/15/2009 5:57:25 PM

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**happyveecat** wrote:



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YES!!!! I love Shakey's food but only go there in the spring and summer when I can sit outside and not be 'smoked in'! I applaud this move!! Thank you Shakey  
 3/15/2009 1:42:22 PM

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**Pathos57** wrote:

Yes, when I think "healthy" I think Shakey's. That's hilarious. I am a NON-smoker but believe people should be allowed to use a legal product reasonably. Alcohol causes a myriad of problems, physically, socially, and economically. However, it is not the great hobgoblin of the rabid anti-smoking ilk that are on the warpath to CHOOSE for everyone what we SHOULD do. Reader I have no way of knowing your life style. Are you healthy? Are you careful about what you eat or who you sleep with? Are you a Type A personality? I have no way of knowing if you drink too much, rest too little or take your medication properly. It is none of my business. While I don't care for cigarette smoke, I care even less for those that feel it is their duty to dictate to everyone else or for business owners that capitulate to them. That was Shakey's choice. My choice will be to go elsewhere. Finally, ask yourself this: When these behavior nazi's are done with smokers, who's next?

3/14/2009 5:21:10 AM

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