

# barf man: not your typical advocate

By BreAnna Dupuis; Vancouver, WA  
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If Erik Vidstand's nickname doesn't grab your attention, his "Barf Mobile" certainly will. Its bright red exterior (see picture) is painted to look like a Marlboro carton. On both sides a decal is painted with the words "Barfboro Barfing Team," thus the name "Barf Mobile." On the front a "Choke'n'gagin" sign covers the wheel. He said that kids came up with the name during the vans early days, and the name stuck.

He started his anti-tobacco quest volunteering at Disneyland in July 1993. There, tobacco industries were handing out t-shirts and other such propaganda to adults and children. The Barf Man knew what he had to do... "I decided to paint my van and go where they [Big Tobacco] go."

And he did just that. He went everywhere tobacco industries were promoting their product. Erik handed out T-shirts, "barf-bags," trading cards, and just about anything that advocated against tobacco. He began going to schools and radio stations, preaching the dangers of tobacco, and the benefits of a smoke-free life. "Every town I went to I would get either a radio or a T.V. spot." As a result of this publicity, Marlboro contests in Arkansas, New Mexico, and Colorado were canceled.

Erik says he makes sure to use plenty of humor, "Lots of kids don't read brochures, lots of adults don't either. I try to keep the work kid-driven."

The Barf Man took his messages to doctors, and was hired shortly after by DOC (Doctors Ought to Care); enabling him to expand his efforts. In all, he has visited 20 states and has made a lasting impact on countless individuals throughout the country.

At the Yakima Prevention Conference last October, he made another one of his appearances to promote anti-tobacco efforts. He participated in the youth rally that was held by driving his Barf Mobile, honking the horn, and waving to the onlookers. He says that he will try to continue for as long as he can, but realizes that eventually he will have to pass down the responsibility to a younger Barf Man.



Photo by Autumn McCartan; Carson, WA

Joe, Barf Man, and BreAnna, posing in front of the Barf Mobile.