

## Local

Central Minnesota local news for 26 September, 2004

[Archive](#)
[Next Story](#)
[Previous Story](#)
[Today's Headlines](#)
[Subscribe Now!](#)

## Special Sections

[Contact Your Official](#)
[Election 2003](#)
[Recycling 2003](#)
[Census 2000](#)

## More News

[Business](#)
[Entertainment](#)
[Life](#)
[Local](#)
[Obituaries](#)
[Opinion](#)
[Sports](#)
[Nation/World](#)
[Technology](#)

## Related Links

[GolfCourses](#)
[Town Tour](#)
[Gas Price Watch](#)
[School Watch](#)
[Space.com](#)

## Other Links

[Jobs](#)
[Classifieds](#)
[Real Estate](#)
[Apartments](#)
[cars.com](#)
[Shopping News](#)
[Contact Us](#)

Times photo by Kimm Anderson,  
kanderson@stcloudtimes.com

John Weber's anti-smoking billboards have adorned many high-traffic areas in Minnesota, such as this one north of Little Falls on Minnesota Highway 371.

26 September, 2004

## Man uses damaged lungs to discourage smokers

By Kate Kompas

kkompas@stcloudtimes.com

[PRINTER FRIENDLY VERSION](#)



LITTLE FALLS -- Most Central Minnesotans don't know John Weber, but they've probably seen his lungs.

Weber has spent a year trying to persuade people to quit smoking. He uses his body as evidence it's wise to kick the habit: He's put scans of his chest, including his large, cancerous tumor, on T-shirts and Central Minnesota billboards.

Weber, 61, also has been traveling to area schools to talk about his lung cancer, which is in remission.

"I think (Weber) helped a couple of kids to quit smoking," said Marco Antonio Ahedo, 16, a student at Freshwater Area Learning Center in Long Prairie. His class raised money to put up one of Weber's billboards.

Weber has paid for much of the campaign out of his own pocket. He said he's talked to more than 1,600 students in the past year. Thousands more have seen his billboards.

"I've had a ball," said Weber, a former Long Prairie resident who moved last summer to Longville.

Weber's history with cigarettes gives him credibility with students. He smoked for about 49 years. He was diagnosed with lung cancer in February 2003.

### Impact

Weber said he's seen a few students sheepishly light up minutes after his presentation. But he hopes a few of them take his message to heart.

"It's an addictive drug," he said. "If I was their age, I wouldn't listen to someone my age."

Brandon King listens to him. The 17-year-old Freshwater student went from a three-pack-a-day habit to five cigarettes or fewer a day. Weber's graphic tales of chemotherapy inspired King to cut back. He likes Weber's matter-of-fact approach. "He's one of a kind," King said.

DVDs, too

Weber's not done. He will add billboards in Moorhead and Rochester, and he now has his presentation on a DVD he's selling for \$15.

One of Weber's challenges is that he doesn't look sick -- the occasional cough is the only outward sign that this man has an inoperable tumor.

To remind students his illness is real, Weber sometimes wears a piece of green foam around his neck that is the about the size of his tumor.

Weber feels pretty good, considering he had angioplasty in June. But he doesn't have illusions his health will magically improve.

"Having cancer is like having a time bomb," he said. "You just don't know."

Learn about Weber

John Weber's Web site is at [www.rea-alp.com/dragfly/](http://www.rea-alp.com/dragfly/). It has information on his background, a diary of his chemotherapy treatments, images of his chest scans and an order form for his new DVD.

## Story Chat

**Read**

---

[Problems with the website, or do you have a news tip for us? Click here.](#)

---

[St. Cloud Times Online](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Classified Times](#) | [Hometimes](#)

Use of this site signifies your agreement to the [Terms of Service](#) (updated 12/31/2002).

News Online Read And Display v5.1  
All Rights Reserved, © 2003  
St. Cloud Times Online