



**what is it?** *Wisconsin Wins* (WI WINS) aims to reduce the illegal sale of tobacco products to minors, with the ultimate goal of reducing the number of Wisconsin teens who become addicted to tobacco.

**why?** The reason for such a comprehensive program is clear. In 2001, the sale of tobacco products to minors in WI reached a record high of 34%. In La Crosse County, the numbers were even worse. The sale rate in the county reached 44% (sale rate in 1999 was only 17%). In addition, if the sale rate remained above 20%, Wisconsin would lose \$10 million in federal Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment aid. It was clear that immediate action needed to be taken to reduce illegal sales to minors.

**about the program** Wisconsin decided to use WI WINS, a recognition and reminder program, to reverse the illegal sales trend. Minors are sent into tobacco-selling establishments, and attempt to purchase a tobacco product (they never actually purchase tobacco). There are no fines handed out as part of the program. If a clerk is willing to sell to a minor, the business receives a reminder letter encouraging all employees to check ID. If the clerk asks for ID, he or she is immediately rewarded with a gift certificate and a "congratulations" for not selling to minors. Since WI Wins was launched by the La Crosse County Health Department in June 2002, La Crosse County has seen a tremendous decrease in the rate in which tobacco products are sold to minors. In 2003, the La Crosse County Health Department conducted 421 checks, with only 9.9% of clerks willing to sell tobacco products to minors.