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Appleton helped pave way for Wisconsin smoking ban

By Ben Jones

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MADISON — Years before Gov. Jim Doyle signed a statewide smoking ban into law, an Appleton alderman knew exactly what would make this day happen.

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“If you don’t have municipalities that move this type of thing forward, it will never occur at the state level,” said Shiloh Ramos, a former member of the Appleton Common Council. “You have to have that momentum at the local level before you are ever going to have momentum at the state level.”

And so, nearly five years ago Ramos introduced a smoking ordinance to the Appleton Common Council.

“The best situation would be a statewide ordinance, but the reality is to get that statewide ordinance you have to start somewhere,” he said.

Ramos, a physician, said he sees the effects of smoking on the health of his patients.

“My first goal was to start the conversation, bring it to the floor and get people talking about it,” he said.

Ramos’ first ordinance, introduced in September 2004, called for a smoking ban that would apply to all businesses in Appleton.

The city and the council were divided on the issue. In December, the council rejected the ordinance.

But in April 2005, Appleton voters passed the ban in a referendum, 9,726 to 7,551, becoming one of the first cities in the state to pass a ban.

Ramos left the council in 2005. He moved to Neenah and said that while some people speculated his move was tied to politics, he said that’s not the case. He now serves on the Winnebago County Board.

He said he was thrilled that Doyle signed a statewide ban into law Monday.

“It’s one of the biggest public health leaps forward in our state in a very long time,” Ramos said.
