

# Hospice's 'Slims' stand faulted

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## Tobacco, tennis don't mix, critics complain

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In the latest battle for the good will of nonsmokers, a local hospice has been criticized for running concession stands at the Virginia Slims of Florida tennis tournament in Boca Raton this week.

Writing to a local newspaper, one Boca Raton resident called the arrangement between Hospice by the Sea and the tournament, sponsored by Virginia Slims cigarette-maker Phillip Morris U.S.A., "Hypocrisy by the Sea."

What some see as a conflict has drawn quick responses from public relations officers at the New York City headquarters of Phillip Morris and the American Cancer Society.

Both sides have long been locked in bitter battles over tobacco company marketing and health, culminating last spring when U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Louis Sullivan encouraged a boycott of events sponsored by cigarette makers.

"Over 400,000 people die of tobacco-related causes" in this country each year, said Joann Schellenbach, director of media relations

for the society. "It's totally inappropriate for tobacco companies to sponsor athletic events."

She added, "It's quite surprising that an organization like a hospice would use a tobacco-supported event even to raise money for a worthwhile cause."

At Phillip Morris, company spokeswoman Sheila Banks called anti-smoking advocates "zealots" who "want everybody to do things like they do."

"We of course maintain that smoking is an adult choice, something for grown folks to do if they want to," she said.

For hospice managers, it's a misunderstanding.

"The Virginia Slims is just a tournament," said Executive Director Trudi Webb. The hospice, which houses about 135 terminally ill patients at a time, about 90 percent with cancer, was contacted by an independent caterer to provide volunteers in exchange for a portion of food sales, she said.

"We are not in any way promoting the sale of tobacco, nor do we con-

done it," Webb said. "The bottom line is, I need to fund-raise and I need to take care of the patients. The money is coming from the catering service, which is serving the food, not tobacco."

The hospice, which serves Palm Beach and Broward counties, gets 20 percent of its \$5 million annual budget from fund raising and expects about \$7,000 from the tournament, Webb said. At the Boca Raton Polo Club site, four concession tents carry small "Hospice by the Sea" banners outside the main stadium.

The battle over tobacco company marketing, particularly in women's tennis, dates back to the first Virginia Slims tournament, in 1970.

In 1988, the Women's Tennis Association voted to keep Virginia Slims as sponsor — citing loyalty to its original backer — over Procter & Gamble, despite strong anti-smoking sentiment.

The company lately has tried to deflect charges that it encourages young people to smoke, barring ball boys and girls from wearing Virginia Slims shirts and sweat shirts during its 13 U.S. tournaments this year.