

Helen Stjerna & Kristian Hell
Photo by Jens Andersson



A Non Smoking Generation

The year is 1979, and two strangers meet at a party. As the evening progresses, their conversation turns to a shared concern: Smoking is growing rapidly among children, and tobacco companies are using disruptive marketing strategies to attract a younger audience. This calls for a new, modern approach, the two strangers conclude. This late night in '79 sparks a new movement. 40 years later, A Non Smoking Generation still fights to change attitudes and reveal the truth about tobacco companies' hidden agenda.

A Non Smoking Generation has educated, inspired and engaged over two million children. In recent years, many actions have been taken to eliminate smoking on streets and in public areas: A ban on smoking inside restaurants and bars was introduced in 2005, and quite recently a similar bill was passed, making many public spaces in the city, e.g. restaurant terraces, smoke-free zones. Loads of good things happen when strangers meet, and here's yet another example: Downtown Camper is partnering up with A Non Smoking Generation to promote an active, healthy and sustainable lifestyle. This spring, a series of running events will be held to support the cause. Leading the events are the hotel's Lifestyle Manager, Kristian Hell, and Helen Stjerna, Secretary-General at A Non Smoking Generation. As usual at Downtown Camper, anyone is welcome to join.

Kristian: Hi Helen, tell us your story. What is it about this issue that engages you?

Helen: I decided to get involved when my father died of smoke-related illness. The worst thing is probably not that he died 20 years prematurely, but that he was feeling sick of all the toxins that his body was exposed to, and yet he chose not to change. For those who were close to him, it was difficult to understand and accept that he repeatedly chose the cigarettes over his own health and family. I think it says a lot about the effects of nicotine on the human brain. Shortly after my father's death, A Non Smoking Generation searched for a new Secretary-General and for me, it felt natural to apply for the job.

Kristian: What do you think about the recent regulations for smoking in public areas?

Helen: Smoke-free environments are critical. In the 1970s, you could smoke just about anywhere, and the result of that was that everyone did. Adding to that, almost everything about tobacco is contagious: No one plans to become a smoker - almost everyone starts for social reasons. Over the years, A Non Smoking Generation helped secure laws and legislations to expand smoke-free environments. It's exciting to see to what effect this will reduce the number of smokers in the years to come. The biggest concern is that tobacco companies tend to find new ways to reach out. An important focus for us is getting the schools tobacco-free, and a challenge right now is all the new products: Fresh/candy-like flavoured tobacco that appeal to young people, and new strategies that help spread the message. Today, it's easy for anyone to claim a free sample by just clicking on a sponsored post in social media.

Kristian: We've seen big stars like Agnetha Fältskog from ABBA, Ted Gärdestad and Ingemar Stenmark wear your t-shirt. It gave your brand an iconic status. Tell us about that strategy.

Helen: It has always been essential for us to highlight good role models and our t-shirt is an important statement for children and young people's health. As we celebrated our 40th anniversary, we did an updated version of our original campaign from 1979. We received fantastic support from more than 50 influencers who took selfies wearing our t-shirt. And of course this time, it was released in social media - the best way to reach young people.

Kristian: On every first Thursday of the month, we will run for health to support a tobacco-free world. You and I will host these runs that are open for anyone to join. Looking forward?

Helen: So much! We are delighted to be working with Downtown Camper - it gives us a new platform from which to spread knowledge about how tobacco counteracts global sustainable development. Most people know how harmful tobacco is for health, but not many are aware that it also has terrible effects on the environment. Together we can give both children and adults strong arguments for tobacco freedom.

Get involved! Join DC staff, hotel guests and Stockholm locals for an easy, social run every first Thursday of the month. Check out the event on Facebook and support the cause by picking up your own t-shirt or tote bag in the hotel gift shop.

**Run For Health with
A Non Smoking Generation**

5 March, 6pm
2 April, 6 pm
7 May, 6pm
4 June, 6pm