

## **STUDENTS MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN PUBLIC SMOKING POLICIES**

*Raising youth awareness about smoking hazards and the impact students can have on reducing exposure*

### **Public Health Problem**

- Twenty-five percent of Kentucky high school students are smokers.
- The health risks associated with tobacco use and secondhand smoke are well documented but in states such as Kentucky where tobacco production is a major cash crop, opposition to adopting smoke-free policies can be strong.
- Students gain confidence and skills by applying their knowledge about tobacco to a project that also helps their community.

### **Program**

- Youth from Kentucky's 4-H Team Leadership Councils participated in a local Help Overcome Tobacco Youth Conference.
- Coordinated School Health Initiative (Kentucky Department for Public Health and Kentucky Department of Education) and the Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Program which are both funded through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, jointly planned and conducted regional conferences with the Pike County Health Department through Kentucky's ALERT Regional Prevention Center to raise awareness on tobacco-related issues and to increase capacity for youth advocacy efforts in tobacco use prevention.
- Students learned how to organize a public awareness campaign and to contact elected officials. These teens then organized and led other teenagers to spearhead a petition campaign, ultimately gathering 4,000 signatures in support of a smoke-free ordinance for the Pike County Fiscal Court and Hall of Justice Buildings.
- Representatives from the health department in Pike County, the American Cancer Society, and other groups provided support by offering smoking cessation classes for those affected by the proposed smoking ordinance.

### **Impact**

- The smoking ordinance was approved unanimously. Accomplished through student advocacy, it prohibits smoking in all enclosed areas within the two public buildings or within 15 feet of the buildings.
- This smoking ordinance is a positive model for students and communities in Kentucky on the citizenship role in working together to achieve a healthier community.
- Integrating functions of two federally-funded programs maximized benefit and used program resources wisely.

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