

July 3, 2018

Video focuses on dangers of tobacco to youngsters

MOBILE, Alabama — S.W.A.T. (Students Working Against Tobacco) is a group of Mobile County Public School System students recruited by a school sponsor to serve as peer tobacco prevention educators in elementary and middle schools, with a focus on students in grades four through eight.

Among area high schools in the program are Alma Bryant, Mary G. Montgomery, Murphy and Vigor. Harold Jones oversees the program through the Mobile County Health Department's Community Prevention Programs.

The students' mission is to "deter youth initiation of tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke." S.W.A.T students are trained to address: peer-helping, tobacco related health issues, anti-tobacco advocacy issues, and tobacco industry tactics and advertising.

To help share the message, Jones joined with James Currie — MCHD's Graphic Communication Specialist — to write, direct and produce a 30-second video. S.W.A.T. members Chelsea Horne, Breanna Bullard and Kayla Brown, along with Mary G. Montgomery's S.W.A.T. team sponsor Melva Holliman, also assisted in the production. MCHD and other grantees in the state will submit their videos into a contest sponsored by the Alabama Department of Public health.

"The video is one of the required activities of the grant from ADPH, Tobacco Prevention and Control Branch," Jones said. "We had to create a 30-second video depicting how big tobacco companies try to target our youth or the impact of tobacco on our youth here in Mobile County. In our video, we focused on showing how youth are sentenced to deal with serious health problems or even having a lifelong addiction if they use tobacco."

Counter Tools is an organization that envisions a nation where engaged communities and public health workers partner to implement policies that grant every person an opportunity to live a healthy life, in a healthy and equitable place. They provide ADPH with software, training and technical assistance so public health practitioners and researchers who are working to enact and enforce policy and system change; along with environmental interventions to promote public health.

The video's storyline revolved around a young teen female receiving her reward (lifelong addiction with the possibility of cancer, COPD, emphysema, heart disease, bad lungs and much more) for using a deadly and addictive product (tobacco) at such a young age. In this instance, Jones represented a judge executing the sentencing on behalf of the big tobacco companies. The main point is that 90 percent of all smokers start by age 18. "The younger smokers are when they start, the more likely they are to become addicted," Jones said.

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The courtroom is an actual courtroom located at LeFlore High School as part of the school's Academy of Law and Public Safety Program. To view the video, please visit MCHD's YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/IloveMCHD/ or www.youtube.com/watch?v=s5ugyzJ0I8w.

According to www.kickbuttsday.org, tobacco kills 480,000 people each year. This is more than AIDS, alcohol, car accidents, illegal drugs, murders and suicides combined. This makes tobacco products the number one cause of preventable death and diseases in the U.S.

For more information about the S.W.A.T. program, contact Jones at 251-544-2064 or at hjones@mchd.org.

The Tobacco Prevention and Control (TPC) Branch of ADPH works with local coalitions, community agencies, and state and national partners to implement and evaluate effective tobacco prevention and cessation activities that meet the following goals: eliminating environmental tobacco use exposure; promoting quitting among adults and youth; preventing youth initiation; and identifying and eliminating disparities among populations

TPC reports studies show about 70 percent of all smokers want to quit. In Alabama, smokers can receive free help by visiting <http://quitnowalabama.com> or calling 800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669).

Key findings from ADPH's The Burden of Tobacco in Alabama include:

- High school students who smoke: 18.6 percent (Girls: 14.8 percent; Boys: 22.2 percent)
- Male high school students who use smokeless or spit tobacco: 19.1 percent
- Children (under 18) who become new daily smokers each year: 9,300
- Children exposed to secondhand smoke at home: 289,000
- Packs of cigarettes bought or smoked by children each year: 12.8 million
- Adults in Alabama who smoke: 22.5 percent (Men - 25.7 percent; Women - 19.7 percent; Pregnant Females - 12.0 percent)
- 8,685 deaths in Alabama were attributable to smoking-related diseases (3,293 to cancer; 2,339 to cardiovascular disease; 2,264 deaths to respiratory disease; 789 to secondhand smoke (SHS) and smoking-related fires)
- 121,909 years of potential life were lost because smoking-attributable premature death
- 15.3 average of years lost among adults who died as a result of a smoking attributable illness.
- 157,920 Alabama residents are living with a smoking-attributable illness.
- \$1.66 billion in excess personal medical care expenditures were attributable to smoking.
- \$2.84 billion in productivity losses were attributable to smoking-related premature death.
- \$941 million in productivity losses were attributable to smoking-related illnesses.
- \$166 million in personal medical costs and productivity losses were attributable to exposure to SHS.
- \$5.6 billion was the estimated total annual economic impact of tobacco use.