

Hays Daily
News
Hays, KS
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By: Janae Talbott

Concerns about underage access to tobacco products are on the rise amongst area parents, youth and professionals. Many programs and initiatives have been implemented in communities and schools to help prevent youth from starting tobacco use.

Research indicates that adolescents between the ages of 12 and 17 who smoke daily are 15 times more likely to use illicit drugs than peers who do not smoke, and the earlier youth begin using tobacco, the more likely they will continue use into adulthood.

This research and data makes us all take a step back and consider how we can help youth not use tobacco products and, therefore, also prevent other high risk behaviors for our youth.

Several area parents, youth, and professionals participated in a questionnaire. Following is a summary of replies from participating individuals.

Are you concerned about tobacco use in your community? Why or why not?

"Yes, I am concerned because we know that the human brain doesn't mature until around the age of 24. Initiation of any addictive substance before this age has been proven to create a stronger addiction response with less of the drug than it would an adult. The tobacco industry knows this and targets youth as their replacement customers." — Gina Frack, Norton County Health Department

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"Yes, with the evils of society always lurking in the shadow you will always have a concern for the youth and hoping they make the right choices while following that

path through life." — Don Jenkins, Chief of Police, Stockton

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"Anytime you have a youth using an illegal product it is a concern." — Marty Clark, Magistrate Judge, Russell County

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"Yes, because many people throughout the community, legal or not, are beginning to smoke, just to look or be cool." — A youth from Norton County

In your opinion, is tobacco easily available to our youth?

"Yes, most of the youth that use tobacco in our community have purchased it through friends that are 18. The retailers in our community work very hard in checking I.D.'s and not selling to underage youth." — Don Jenkins, Chief of Police, Stockton

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"Yes, they could have someone buy it for them if they are too young." — A youth from Norton County

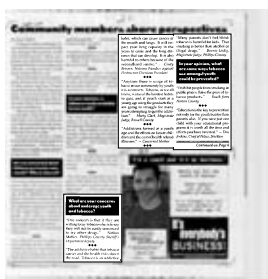
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"Yes, because if parents use tobacco, their kids can steal it from them or some parents give it to their kids." — Youth from Norton County





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What are your concerns about underage youth and tobacco?

“One concern is that if they are willing to try tobacco who is to say they will not be easily convinced to try other drugs.” — *Nathan Mathes, Phillips County Sheriff's Department deputy*



“The addictive habit that tobacco causes and the health risks down the road. Tobacco is an addictive

habit, which can cause cancer of the mouth and lungs. It will impact your lung capacity in the years to come and the lung diseases that can develop. It is also harmful to others because of the secondhand smoke.” — *Cindy Beisner, Natoma Families against Destructive Decisions President*



“Anytime there is usage of tobacco in our community by youth it is a concern. Tobacco, as we all know, is one of the hardest habits to quit, and if youth start at a young age using the products they are going to struggle for many years attempting to quit the addiction.” — *Marty Clark, Magistrate*

Judge, Russell County



“Addictions formed at a youth age and the effects on future children and the cost of health related illnesses.” — *Concerned Mother*



“Many parents don't feel/think tobacco is harmful for kids. That smoking is better than alcohol or illegal drugs.” — *Bonnie Leidig, Magistrate Judge, Phillips County*

In your opinion, what are some ways tobacco use amongst youth could be prevented?

“Prohibit people from smoking in public places. Raise the price of tobacco products.” — *Youth from Norton County*



“Education is the key to prevention not only for the youth but for their parents also. If you save just one child with your educational programs it is worth all the time and efforts you have invested.” — *Don Jenkins, Chief of Police, Stockton*

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“Finally convince older people not to contribute to minors.” — *Youth from Norton County*



“Continue educating youth on the harmful effects and fines for those who are underage caught using.” — *Rick Riffel, Principal, Phillipsburg Middle School*

As a community member, what do you feel you can do to help youth make healthy choices?

“Impress upon youth that they are responsible for their health and future family. Tobacco use is business based on making money from the addiction to nicotine. They are using people’s addictions to make money.” — *Concerned Mother*



“Stop the peer pressure to be cool and accepted in society.” — *Youth from Norton County*



“Programs from adults that have been there, done that, and have come around to realize that it was a bad choice. Keep stressing to youth that there are risks involved in tobacco use. Even get the older community members to speak up that have health problems now that are related to their smoking

or having smoked when they were younger.” — *Cindy Beisner, Natoma Families against Destructive Decisions President*



“Make more places tobacco free.” — *Youth from Norton County*

Do you feel that additional education needs to be done with youth, parents, retailers, and the community on youth tobacco use? Why or why not?

“Yes, we don’t need another generation of smokers.” — *Youth from Norton County*



“Education with all of those parties is important, but most effective I feel efforts need to be geared towards youth at a younger age and continued through their teens. We also need to continue our work with local retail businesses to assist them in their efforts to reduce tobacco sales.” — *Marty Clark, Magistrate Judge, Russell County*



“Yes. Tobacco continues to be used, promoted and accessed worldwide. As long as the tobacco industry is still operating there will always be a need for us to continue our tobacco control efforts.” — *Gina Frack, Norton County Health Department*





What do you feel you can do to help prevent teen tobacco use in your community?

"It starts with my kids. I don't smoke." — *Concerned Mother*



"Keep talking with youth about the harmful effects tobacco has on a person as they get older and what it does to others with breathing secondhand smoke." — *Cindy Beisner, Natoma Families against Destructive Decisions President*



"Don't use and show young people life can be full without tobacco, alcohol and drugs, always stress the healthful and financial gain." — *Bonnie Leidig, Magistrate Judge, Phillips County*



"Set a good example by not smoking or using tobacco. Encourage

others not to use tobacco." — *Youth from Norton County*



"Continue to support the education of tobacco use prevention and its negative effects." — *Rick Riffel, Principal, Phillipsburg Middle School*

Making a difference in the lives of our youth and getting through to them about the risks of smoking requires asking them good questions and talking candidly about the consequences of smoking and tobacco use.

We also have to enlist the community in changing practices and norms that encourage or accept underage tobacco use. Retailers also play a key role in stopping the sale of tobacco products to underage youth.

Working together as community members, parents, youth, professionals, retailers, and schools we can make a healthier future for youth tobacco-free.

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