



CATAWBA COUNTY

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Public Health

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Catawba County Teens Combat Tobacco Use During The Great American Smokeout

Young people from Catawba County will be taking part in The American Cancer Society's Great American Smokeout (GASO) on Thursday, November 19, 2009. This nationwide event encourages tobacco users to give up their habit for one day, in hopes of making a clean break from tobacco now or in the future.

Local restaurants are encouraged to participate in the Great American Smokeout by going smoke-free. Glen Oaks Snack Bar in Maiden is going smoke-free for the day on November 19th. Youssef 242 in Hickory will permanently be smoke free starting on the 19th, over a month before the new state law banning smoking in restaurants takes effect on January 2nd.

"I think it's great that restaurants are going smoke free," said Mollie Jones, junior at Hickory High School. "There is no such thing as a 'no-smoking area' because the smoke travels in the air throughout the entire restaurant."

As part of the GASO celebration, students from Maiden and Hickory High School tobacco prevention groups known as TRU (Tobacco Reality Unfiltered) Teams will take time to visit local restaurants to thank them for going smoke-free. Students will also participate in activities aimed towards helping their peers kick the habit of smoking, such as making posters with smoking facts to place within their school and distributing information during lunch periods. They will also recruit students to sign pledges to remain smoke free.

Throughout the year, these young advocates take part in a variety of activities aimed to educate their peers on the dangers of using tobacco. They participate in workshops and help to provide input for policies that reduce teen tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke.

"I joined TRU because I feel that people need to know facts about tobacco use. Personally, I feel a responsibility to help get the word out," said Crystal Fuller, a junior at Hickory High School.

Since 2003, Catawba County Public Health's teen tobacco prevention activities have been funded by a grant from the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF). There are 5 high schools in Catawba County that have TRU Teams. "We are very lucky to have such wonderful partnerships with the schools and active teen groups," said Jennifer Shomaker, Tobacco Prevention Coordinator. "We are seeing a steady decline in teen tobacco use, which is a trend that I hope continues."

Tobacco is the leading preventable cause of death in the US, killing more than 400,000 people every year. Every day, more than 4,000 youth try their first cigarette; another 1,000 youth become addicted smokers, one-third of whom will die prematurely as a result.

For information about the GASO event(s) in Catawba County, contact Lindsey Smith at 828-695-5817 or LindseyS@catawbacountync.gov.



"Leading the Way to a Healthier Community"
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ABOUT TRU:

Tobacco. Reality. Unfiltered., commonly known as TRU, uses testimonials of real North Carolina teens as well as hard-hitting facts to dissuade youth from using tobacco. Funded at \$65 million from HWTF, this grassroots initiative includes the TRU media campaign, as well as a grant programs to organizations working in all 100 counties to reduce teen tobacco use. To find out more about TRU, please visit www.realityunfiltered.com.

ABOUT THE NC HEALTH AND WELLNESS TRUST FUND:

The NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund makes North Carolina stronger, both physically and economically, by funding programs that promote preventive health. Created by the General Assembly in 2000 to allocate a portion of North Carolina's share of the national tobacco settlement, HWTF has invested \$199 million to support preventive health initiatives and \$102 million to fund prescription drug assistance programs. For more information, please visit www.HealthWellNC.com.

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