

# Removing The Allure Of Smoking

BY LAURA LANE, SAFE, INC.

According to the American Medical Association, children in the 1980s, as young as 5 and 6 years old, were better able to recognize Joe Camel, the mascot of the Camel cigarette brand, than they were Mickey Mouse or Barbie.

Efforts nationwide have increased to stop people from smoking. But many experts believe that a big part of the problem is the packaging of cigarettes. In New York State, the tobacco industry spends approximately \$1.1 million per day to market their products. They pay retailers to prominently display tobacco products. According to the Tobacco Action Coalition of Long Island, the more tobacco retailers there are near schools, the more likely children are to smoke.

"Tobacco companies run a very aggressive market campaign that is directed at the younger generation," says Tony Gallo, SAFE Coalition co-chair and Glen Cove City councilman. "Packaging of tobacco products is very appealing for young kids and the product placement in stores is usually in areas where children gather to look at other items."

Gallo, a Glen Cove health teacher, has his middle school students analyze cigarette advertisements.

"They are very fun and appealing," he says. "The actors look cool and everyone appears to be having a great time while smoking or chewing tobacco. I believe that education is the key and having an informed student body that can reverse and refuse peer pressure when it comes to smoking."

Only one in 10 smokers starts smoking after the age of 18. The Bach-Harrison Prevention Needs Assessment Survey indicates that smoking among Glen Cove's youth is on the rise as follows: 0.5 percent increase in the sixth grade; 2.5 percent increase in the eighth grade; 3.2 percent increase in the 10th grade and 2.3 percent increase in the 12th grade. A reported 14.4 percent of the eighth-graders have tried smoking at least once in their lifetime which is a large increase from sixth grade. Lifetime cigarette use has continued to rise in the 10th grade by 32.3 percent and in the 12th grade by 41.4 percent.

Australia's tough new anti-tobacco marketing law begins on Dec. 1. Cigarettes and tobacco products will need to be sold in plain olive green packets without special colorful branding. The brand name will be written in small, standardized lettering. Packages must display graphic health warnings including pictures of mouth cancer and other smoking-related illnesses. It will be interesting to see if this approach will stop people from smoking and help those considering quitting to have the stamina to move forward.

SAFE's Coalition will be looking into tobacco marketing/advertising collaboratively with the Tobacco Action Coalition of Long Island based on the findings from the Bach-Harrison Survey administered this year to students in the 6,8,10 and 12th grades.

SAFE Inc. is a not-for-profit tax-exempt substance abuse education and prevention agency located in Glen Cove. For further information visit [www.safe-glencove.org](http://www.safe-glencove.org) or call 676-2008.