

We've Seen Enough at GCHS

Teaching youth how to join in fight to stop tobacco marketing

There's a statewide initiative to combat youth cigarette and tobacco product use that focuses on teaching our youth all about the power of cigarette and tobacco marketing in local stores and in advertising in general.

Although Joe Camel, a popular advertising tool for Camel cigarettes, is no longer permitted in youth magazines and publications, there remain many avenues used by cigarette companies to lure young people into beginning, what they hope, will be a life-long addiction to cigarettes and tobacco products.

The statewide initiative, which has been effective nationwide, was brought to Glen Cove High School the week of Dec. 10 by the SAFE Pride Project Coalition's School Committee who partnered with the Glen Cove School District's Health, Physical Education & Athletic Department and the Tobacco Action Coalition of LI.

Safe Inc.'s Pride Project Coalition conducts needs assessments every two years to measure youth alcohol, tobacco and other drug use. In 2012, the Bach Harrison Prevention Needs Assessment Survey indicated tobacco use had increased from 2010 across 6, 8, 10, and 12th graders.

surprised when she is spoken to by cigarettes behind the counter. The message is clear. Tobacco companies are working hard to encourage youth to smoke.

Part of the program also included an opportunity for students to sign team comment postcards, and for teachers to sign an adult postcard stating their

alition (TAC), said she was impressed by the student leaders that manned the tables. "They assumed the role of peer mentors and ambassadors of the initiative," she said. "It is so rewarding to see youth leaders emerge as a result of one these programs."

The Glen Cove teens want to also write to their local newspapers to make others

poison in cigarettes," she added.

Legislator Delia DeRiggi-Whitton went to the high school to commend students for their efforts saying she was proud to participate.

"I have always been very impressed by all that SAFE does to protect the children of Glen Cove and am very happy to support them however possible," said DeRiggi-Whitton. "The issues that SAFE deals with are close to my heart and are issues that I have made a priority in my own work at the legislature - from prescription drug abuse to cigarette marketing and sales."

Even though the weeklong event is over the high school students say they don't want the initiative to end. There is talk about hanging the postcards around the school before sending them to the state so everyone can read them and become more committed to not smoking.

The "Teens as Teachers" and Youth Volunteers included: Caitlin Brown, Nicole Bedell, Surina Joshi, Taylor Grella, Sara Testa, Diana Delgado, Cindy Hernandez, Yanire Pizarro, Joseph Reyes and Anthony Guttilla.

For further information on any SAFE, Inc. PRIDE Project Coalition and their initiatives contact Coalition Coordinator Aimee Abraham at 516-676-2008. SAFE Inc. is a not for profit tax exempt substance abuse education



The Coalition's School Committee Chair Denise Kiernan, who is also the Director of Health at Glen Cove High School signs a petition outside the lunchroom supporting the student's wishes to end cigarette marketing to youth.

support for ending the advertising campaigns and smoking among youth which

in their community aware of the dangers of tobacco marketing.

Since the 2010 survey, past-month cigarette use increased for all grades (0.5% increase in the 6th grade, 2.5% increase in the 8th grade, 3.2% increase in the 10th grade, and 2.3% increase in the 12th grade).

14.4% of 8th graders have tried smoking at least once in their lifetime. Although this rate is below the national MTF rate of 20.0%, it still shows a large increase from 6th grade.

The 30-day use rate among 8th graders is 3.3%, which is an increase from 2010 (0.8%).

Lifetime cigarette use continues to rise into the 10th grade (32.3%) and 12th grade (40.4%).

Dr. Sharon Harris, SAFE's Executive Director, said that the Coalition's School Committee, chaired by Denise Kiernan, partnered with Carol Meschkow, Nassau Project Coordinator the Tobacco Action Coalition of Long Island, to implement the We've Seen Enough campaign at Glen Cove High School.

"Our relationship with the tobacco coalition has helped us educate and make students and staff aware of tobacco marketing and cigarette use among teens," said Kiernan, who is also the Director of Health at Glen Cove High School. "Dr. Sharon Harris and Pride Project Coordinator Aimee Abraham were big players in coordinating this event."

The activities included the viewing of two compelling videos, one that has a middle school student being followed by tobacco reps that are encouraging her to smoke, and another, depicting an elementary school age girl in a deli who is

they plan to send to the state.

On Friday, there was a poster outside the lunchroom to involve all students in the program. They could sign it voicing their support for an end to the cigarette marketing techniques as well as the postcards. And the videos were showing on a nearby screen throughout the day. Many students stopped by because they were curious at first, but once finding out about the initiative they committed to helping by becoming involved.

"The challenge is to get the students to advocate, to make it more challenging for the tobacco companies to do their marketing," said Coalition Co-Chair Tony Gallo. "The idea is to get tobacco products less visible in convenience stores by signing this poster and sending the postcards to New York State lawmakers and we are doing that."

Gallo said the children were very interested in the program. They realize that they are being targeted and were interested in finding what avenues they could use to advocate for themselves.

Teens as Teachers, who are youth leaders at the high school, and student volunteers manned the tables outside the gym encouraging their peers to sign the poster and asking them if they smoked too.

"Being able to see these youth advocating their right to a bright future for themselves, and for the generations that will come after them, is the hope that fuels our work here in Glen Cove," said Pride Project Coordinator Aimee Abraham.

Carol Meschkow, the Nassau Project Coordinator for the Tobacco Action Co-

"I didn't realize the significance advertising had on children," said Caitlin Brown, one of the students at the table. "I feel like we should also do this in gym class instead of just health class since all the kids take gym."

Taylor Grella, also behind the table encouraging her peers to check out all of the information and fill out the post cards, said she'd learned a great deal this past week. "I didn't know that cigarettes have tar in them like the blacktops on the street, she said.

Sara Testa was surprised by just how much power the placement of cigarettes behind the counter has on young children which she learned in one of the videos. "I also didn't know there is rat

and prevention agency located in Glen Cove. Visit our website at [HYPERLINK "http://www.safeglen Cove.org"](http://www.safeglen Cove.org) www.safeglen Cove.org

(below) Members of SAFE, Inc. including Pride Project Coordinator Aimee Abraham, SAFE's Executive Director Dr. Sharon Harris, School Committee Chair Denise Kiernan, and Coalition Co-Chair Tony Gallo, joined Carol Meschkow, Nassau Project Coordinator the Tobacco Action Coalition of Long Island, Nassau County Legislator Delia DeRiggi-Whitton, and Teens as Teacher members and volunteers at Glen Cove High School at the We've Seen Enough program to discourage the marketing of cigarettes to youth.

