

Glen Cove HS Youth Step Up and Call for a Reduction of Tobacco Marketing on GASO 2016

Glen Cove High School students took a stand for the "Great American Smoke Out 2016" (GASO) to call attention to the need to reduce their exposure to tobacco marketing through awareness activities organized by the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition School Committee Chaired by Denise Kiernan, Director of Athletics for Glen Cove School District. The Teens actively challenged smokers to a smoke free day, and hopefully a fresh start of kicking the habit.

GASO is a day of national activism sponsored by the American Cancer Society. Each year, the Great American Smoke Out draws attention to preventing the deaths and chronic diseases caused by smoking. Throughout the late 1980s and 1990s, many state and local governments responded by banning smoking in workplaces and restaurants, raising taxes on cigarettes, limiting cigarette promotions, discouraging teen cigarette use, and taking further action to counter smoking.

The School Committee is pleased to once again be partnering with the Tobacco Action Coalition of LI, and their "Seen Enough Tobacco" campaign to reduce our youth's exposure to tobacco marketing. "Our local youth have stressed that they feel CVS's decision to ban the sale of tobacco demonstrates the importance of this campaign in bringing awareness to the public and our elected officials of the need to reduce their exposure to tobacco marketing", per Ashley Ferruffino-SAFE Coalition Liaison. "Further tobacco marketing has been declared a youth epidemic by former Surgeon General Benjamin, so today we are encouraged to see our next generation step up and call for a reduction in youth's exposure to tobacco marketing".

The High School students who have become educated on tobacco marketing and the techniques used by the tobacco industry to advertise their products manned a table with materials supplied to SAFE and TAC to educate their fellow classmates, and Health Teacher-Anthony Gallo besides his daily in class education played PSA's provided by TAC to garner the attention of the faculty and student body. The teens were encouraged to raise awareness with their peers and adult leaders of the problems of tobacco use in their community, and the misleading message associated with tobacco sales in local pharmacies. This day of national recognition empowers youth to stand out, speak up and seize control against "Big Tobacco".

About 40 million Americans still smoke cigarettes, and tobacco use remains the single largest preventable cause of disease and premature death in the world. In New York, \$235 million a year, or nearly \$650,000 a day, is spent on marketing tobacco products and 280,000 kids under 18 today in NYS will ultimately die prematurely due to smoking. In fact, if the current smoking rates continue 5.6 million Americans younger than 18 who are alive are projected to die prematurely from smoking related diseases.

"Tobacco sales in pharmacies begs the question, as tobacco is the only consumer product that when used as intended, will kill at least one half of its long term users; why is it still being sold in pharmacies? Its displays in stores and local pharmacies give youth the impression that tobacco products are easily accessible and tobacco use is an acceptable behavior. We are so proud of the activism of the teens at Glen Cove High School; and are grateful for our continued partnership with SAFE as we have seen many teen leaders emerge over the years," said Carol Meschkow-Nassau Coordinator for the Tobacco Action Coalition of LI.

"Smoking is deadly, and we need to work together to protect our impressionable teens from the lure of this dangerous product; and that's why the Physical Education and Athletic Department for the Glen Cove School District is particularly concerned. We strive to motivate, and stress the importance to our teens of taking a stand and speaking out for themselves. It is satisfying to see our students advocate for causes that they believe in, such as challenging local pharmacies to re-consider the display of deceptive tobacco marketing promotions", said Anthony Gallo- GCHS Health Teacher.

According to Dr. Sharon Harris- Executive Director of Glen Cove SAFE, “A study recently released by the American Cancer Society found that smokers toll on health is worse than previously thought. The study found five additional diseases attributable to smoking and estimated that an additional 60,000 deaths each year in the US are due to tobacco use. This alarming statistic brings the total annual death toll to 540,000 people dying every year due to smoking related diseases. In NYS 108,500 High School students smoke cigarettes and each year 135,000 kids initiate their addiction as daily smokers”.

In New York State, 82 percent of retailers including pharmacies, convenience stores and gas stations occupy at least half of the space behind counters to openly display tobacco products for all to purview. The Glen Cove High School student leaders have seen enough tobacco marketing and are banding together with the same message, “we want to be the first generation to be tobacco free!”

To learn more about the harmful effects of tobacco marketing in retail stores and pharmacies visit: www.tobaccofreenys.org. For Quit help contact the NYS Quit Line at 1-866-NYS-Quits.

For more information about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition visit SAFE at: www.safeglencove.org.