

# Letters to the Editor

## **Learning About Tobacco Dangers**

*To The Editor,*

We are 6th grade students at the Robert M. Finley Middle School who are taking Health Education classes. Currently, we are learning about how tobacco companies market to our classmates and the youth of America. In honor of the "Great American Smoke-Out 2016" our Health Class would like to bring your attention to the dangers of tobacco, and the impact of tobacco marketing. Tobacco use has been declared a youth epidemic by the Surgeon General, so we are taking a stand to call for a reduction in youth's exposure to tobacco marketing. Did you know that tobacco companies spend over \$600,000 dollars per day in New York State to spread their deadly message?

Smoking is the number one preventable cause of disease and premature death in the world so we are concerned that we are still seeing tobacco advertisements and displays in our local stores. This Great American Smoke-Out, our class has worked with the Tobacco Action Coalition of LI (TAC) and the School Committee of the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition Chaired by Denise Kiernan, Director of Health and Athletics, in an activity to educate our fellow classmates at Robert M. Finley Middle School to the dangerous impacts to teens regarding tobacco marketing in our local stores.

"We are pleased to have partnered with the Coalition and Ms. Sullivan's Health Class for this important day of awareness; especially as the average age of onset is 13 years old, educating and motivating young teens to be peer leaders is so important. Overall, the goal of the Jack and Jill "Seen Enough" Tobacco Campaign is to bring awareness to the public. The students were so knowledgeable about the dangers of tobacco, and we were very impressed with their collective voices in completed teen comment cards expressing their concerns to local leaders that they have

seen enough tobacco marketing at the Point-of-Sale. Teens are twice as likely as adults to recall tobacco advertising", said Carol Meschkow-Nassau Project Coordinator for the Tobacco Action Coalition of LI.

In our Health classes at Finley Middle school, we learn about avoiding destructive decision making, and we are very pleased how we mobilized ourselves to share the dangers of tobacco marketing with other youths, and challenged them to speak out for themselves as well.

According to Amanda Sullivan-Health Teacher and her fellow Health Teacher-Matthew Carbone at Finley Middle School, We are so proud of our student's awareness of the dangers, and their desire to educate their peer to also take a stand against 'Big Tobacco'. Their actions today demonstrate how much they have absorbed of the content material and critical thinking skills".

Dr. Sharon Harris-Executive Director of Glen Cove SAFE added; "A study recently released by the American Cancer Society found that smoker's 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. This is the reason why the Coalition is so pleased to have Ms. Sullivan as active member of the School Committee."

Ashely Ferrufino- SAFE Glen Cove Coalition Liaison commented that "Our local youth have expressed what they learned about the importance of the 'Seen Enough' tobacco campaign in bringing awareness to the public and our elected officials of this issue."

Our health class feels strongly about keeping tobacco products away from our fellow classmates in order to preserve the health of the youth across America. Our goal is to raise awareness of how "Big Tobacco" companies carefully choose placement of advertising their products where youth will see it every time they visit their local retailer.

In addition, we hope our elected officials will consider making more laws which will protect children from tobacco marketing. Research shows that without proactive action to reduce smoking, 5.6 million U.S. children who are alive today will die prematurely from smoking related illnesses. So we are calling on our leaders to take immediate action that will result in reducing tobacco marketing to the youth of our Country.

*Sincerely,*  
*Ms. Sullivan's*  
*Robert M. Finley Middle School*  
*6th Grade Health Class*

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