

Dear Editor,

In celebration of Kick Butts Day 2018 our classes seek to call the community's attention to the significance of this special day. It has been declared a national day of activism that empowers youth to stand out, speak up and seize control against "Big Tobacco". We too are joining in today to raise awareness of the problem of tobacco use.

The SAFE Glen Cove Coalition, the Glen Cove High School Health, Physical Education and Athletics Department Chaired by Mr. Cardone, Mr. Gallo-HS Health Teacher and Co-Chair Chair of SAFE's Community Coalition, and the Tobacco Action Coalition of Long Island (TAC); as active members of the Glen Cove SAFE have partnered once again to engage the local youth in programming to recognize the importance of KBD. The goal was making us aware of the Tobacco Industry's deceptive marketing practices and constructive ways we can encourage our peers to reject their strategies to attract youth to their deadly products.

Mr. Gallo's Health Classes have been actively educating their peers and local electorate for the past several years on the need to raise awareness to the benefits of Tobacco Free Pharmacies in removing these products and their advertisements from local drugstores and retail establishments. To seize control of the problem, we ran empowering programs using campaign materials supplied by TAC. After educating our fellow students on the dangers of tobacco marketing we mobilized to take a stand against "Big Tobacco" with several tabling events, tweets to peers, and prior "Letters to the Editor".

Growing up in a time when we are exposure to social media and the internet on a daily basis we learned that the Tobacco Industry spent over 130 times as much on internet advertising in 2008 as they did in 1998. This was very scary for us to learn; simply by just visiting the internet to keep connected we are often being deceived by this Lobby.

Mr. Gallo, our teacher, athletic coach and mentor pointed out a 2010 study that found that British American Tobacco employees were taking advantage of social networking sites to create fan pages accessible to our peers. In 2004, 34.1% of middle school students and 39.2% of high school students reported seeing advertisements for tobacco products on the internet.

According to Dr. Harris-Executive Director of SAFE, as teens spend more and more time on the web, "Big Tobacco" spends more and more money on internet marketing. There is currently no state or federal laws regulating how the Tobacco Industry markets on the web. This gives the industry the freedom to target our peers in new clever ways through buzz/viral marketing.

Carol Meschkow-Community Engagement Manager of TAC enlightened us that with anonymous posting as easy as the click of a mouse, the Tobacco Industry can recruit new replacement smokers for the 1200 Americans they lose daily to tobacco related illnesses.

As High School students our role as teen leaders will become even more important as we continue to gain more independence, and move on with our education and future careers. Therefore, today we are urging our elected officials to take action to protect kids by calling for the Tobacco Lobby to reduce our exposure to their marketing efforts on the Internet.

To learn more about the harmful effects of tobacco visit: www.tobaccofreenys.org or for help with quitting contact the State's Quitline at: 1-866-NY-QUITS.

For more information about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition visit SAFE Inc. at: www.safeqlencove.org, or follow them on: www.facebook.com/safeqlencovecoalition.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this serious matter.

Sincerely,

Mr. Gallo's Health Classes