

impact

of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences



Economic Development and Quality of Life for People and Communities

Tobacco Use Prevention Program

Issue

The Department of Health and Human Services reported in July '98 that "Persons with lower income or education had a higher prevalence of health risk factors such as cigarette smoking." In 1995, the least educated men and women were more than twice as likely to smoke as the most educated. A survey released in July '98 by Arizona Department of Public Services reported that 15 percent of high school age youth had smoked in the last month, compared with 36.4 percent nationally in 1997. The Arizona survey found that the rate of tobacco use in the past month was less than 1 percent for youth in the 10-11 age group (fifth and sixth grades), and that it gradually increased to 21.2 percent for youth in the 16-17 age group (junior and seniors in high school). Surveys conducted in the Tempe, Ahwatukee, and Guadalupe Tobacco Prevention Program (TAG TUPP) communities showed that youth in this region are most likely to begin experimenting with cigarettes from 11-13 years of age. More than 80 percent of the students said it was very important to have activities that educate youth on the harmful effects of tobacco.

What has been done?

The 4-H Tobacco Use Prevention Program encourages youth to become actively involved in their communities as recognized tobacco use prevention education resources. The targeted communities include Tempe, Ahwatukee and Guadalupe, Arizona. Under the guidance of professional staff members from the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension, seventh and eighth-graders are trained as peer leaders to teach the Tobacco Risk Awareness Program (TRAP) to younger youth. TRAP provides factual information about the health risks of tobacco usage. The program includes information and curriculum on smokeless tobacco and smoking tobacco dangers, videos and fun hands-on activities. The premise is that youth will gain knowledge of the health hazards of tobacco use and will not use tobacco as teens or adults.

Impact

As of June 30, 2002, 189 youth from the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades were recruited and enrolled as peer leaders in four communities in Tempe, Arizona. Eighty-two peer leaders (54.67 percent) increased their public speaking presentation skills by 72 percent based on pre- and post-listener evaluation surveys. Seventy-eight peer leaders (52 percent) increased their knowledge in leadership by 63.3 percent based on pre- and post- leadership skills assessments. Peer leaders presented anti-tobacco demonstrations based on Tobacco Risk and Awareness Prevention curriculum to 381 youth in the 3rd, 4th and 5th grades in the four communities.

"Not only have I learned about tobacco prevention, I've also learned about being a leader. I have taught kids about the dangers of smoking."

—middle school peer leader

Funding

This program is conducted by the University of Arizona 4-H Youth Development and is funded by Tempe, Ahwatukee, Guadalupe Tobacco Use Prevention Program (Centro de Amistad, Inc.), Maricopa County Tobacco Use Prevention Program and Arizona Tobacco Education Prevention Program.

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