

Tobacco Retail Matters:

College Students Sway Board of Health



Team: University of North Carolina at Asheville Students, Henderson County Health Department Staff, and Board of Health

Henderson County Health Department teamed up with students from the University of North Carolina at Asheville and persuaded the Board of Health to sign a resolution that supports keeping tobacco and nicotine products away from kids.

The team of college students and public health staff carried out this project to work on reducing tobacco use among youth. Team members surveyed Henderson County stores to document tobacco advertising and product placement, especially emerging products like e-cigarettes.

Research shows that youth are easily influenced by tobacco marketing tactics. Kids who are exposed to tobacco products and ads have a higher likelihood of tobacco use. When tobacco products are cheap and visible in stores, there is a much greater chance of youth experimenting and becoming daily users. This can lead kids down a lifelong path of nicotine addiction.

After collecting and analyzing the data, the Team revealed that more than 80% of stores sold flavored tobacco products, many of which (35%) displayed tobacco products within a foot of items that appeal to kids, like toys, candy, and bubble gum.

23

College students

63

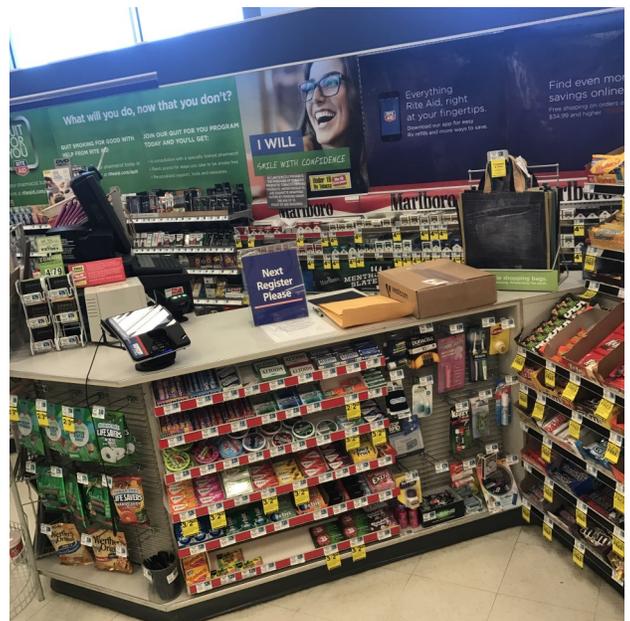
Tobacco retail stores

80%

Stores selling flavored tobacco products

43%

Stores located within 1 mile of a school



While researching ways to reduce teen tobacco use, the team found that **“Raising the age of sale of tobacco products from 18 to 21 would save kid’s lives”** since:

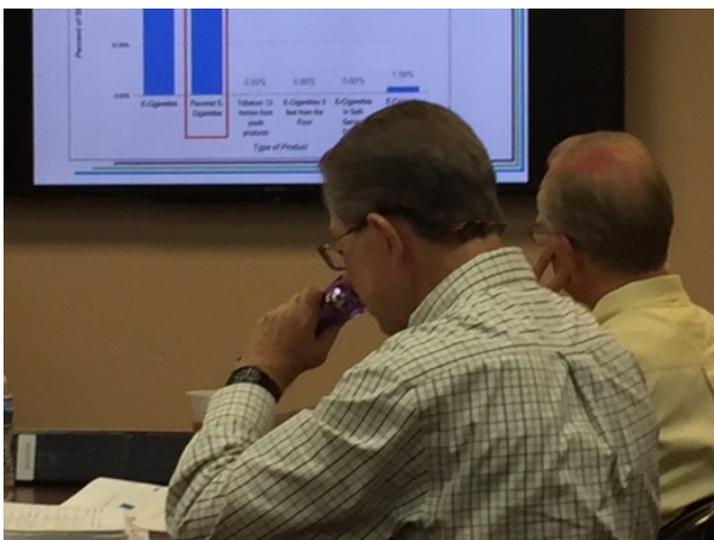
- More than 96% of adult smokers first try cigarettes by the age of 21.
- More than 30% of high school students in North Carolina use tobacco.
- Liquid nicotine in e-cigs is sold in over 7,500 different flavors (mostly fruit and candy flavors).
- The rate of high school students using e-cigs in North Carolina increased by 888% between 2011-2015.



Tobacco products beside candy.

In North Carolina, state law prohibits local governments from passing ordinances and rules regarding tobacco sales, promotion, display, and distribution. However, after hearing the presentation, the Henderson County Board of Health passed a resolution to express support for changes to the state’s tobacco law, including raising the age to purchase tobacco and nicotine products from 18 to 21.

The resolution requested the North Carolina General Assembly to rescind preemption of tobacco regulations and restore local control over tobacco policies as a strong measure to protect young people from starting tobacco use, and help others quit.



Board of Health member checking out a scented (candy-flavored) cigarillo.



Team presenting to the Board of Health.

Photos courtesy of Henderson County Health Department, North Carolina

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