

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 area 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. Cooperative Extension collaborates with 21 different community outreach programs for special events in the target area. Under the guidance of professional staff members from the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension, sixth, seventh and eighth-graders are trained as peer leaders to teach the Tobacco Risk Awareness Program (TRAP) from Ohio State 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

On a post-test, 78 percent of the targeted youth recognized that tobacco is a health hazard. In 2001 more than 500 middle school students were trained as tobacco prevention peer leaders. They provided 1,088 contact hours of tobacco use prevention education to 1,079 youth in grades 3-5.

"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

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Contact

Marifloyd Hamil, 4-H agent
Maricopa County Cooperative Extension
The University of Arizona
4341 E. Broadway Road
Phoenix, AZ 85040-8807
Tel: (602) 470-8086 ext. 344, FAX: (602) 470-8092
Email: mhamil@ag.arizona.edu