

# Tuskahoma School adopts 24/7 Tobacco Free Policy

On Sept. 1st, 2011 Tuskahoma Public School became the 223rd school district in the state of Oklahoma to become Tobacco Free 24/7 following a proposal submitted by Crystal Frizzell from the Choctaw Nation MPOWER tobacco control program & Teresa Davis, Choctaw Nation REACH US coordinator. Currently 67% of the Oklahoma students attend a 24/7 school.

The policy is effective immediately and restricts the use of ALL types of tobacco and tobacco simulation products on all school grounds, including sports complexes and in school vehicles 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

The purpose for the policy is to reduce children's observation of tobacco use. Currently the national average that a child begins using tobacco is 13 years of age. Middle school and high school years are critical in determining whether or not an individual becomes a smoker for life. A 24/7 tobacco-free environment provides genuine opportunity for adults to serve as positive role models for not using tobacco. A 24/7 tobacco-free school policy is not about **whether** adults use tobacco, but **where** they use tobacco. It is about protecting students from future addiction, health problems and supporting a safe school climate for all students, staff and visitors.

The Choctaw Nation Wellness Ed./REACH US and MPOWER programs would like to thank Superintendent Barry Simpson and the School Board for adopting the policy and thanks, in advance, to all the Savage fans for accepting and supporting this policy.



# Sally Carter Youth Advocate Award

## 7th Generation Award 2011



Malachi “Kai” Stroud is a proud member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma! He not only accepts his Native American heritage, he has learned to honor it as well. As a youth leader Kai is a member of the Antlers High School Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT) and the Choctaw Nation Youth Empowerment ~ Youth Advisory Board among many other activities, hobbies and responsibilities. In his community he has worked on several important issues and environmental changes including: social host laws; tobacco policies for schools; youth access and clean indoor air ordinances for cities; physical activity, nutrition and substance abuse for communities and etc. He graduated with honors from junior high school.

Those who know Kai best, find him to be a youth full of creativity, compassion and understanding as well. A best friend described Kai like this: “Kai is the type of person when he sees someone with a weakness or disability, he sees only the person, not the weakness. He sees the beauty in who they are and it comes naturally to him. He is the kind of person that if he sees someone who needs help, he puts out his hand”. One could go on and on about describing Kai’s attributes, abilities and achievements, but six words seem to do it best: He is a man of integrity!

Malachi “Kai” Stroud served as a model for the Oklahoma tribal initiative against the use of commercial tobacco and the “Honor What is Sacred” campaign who made a commitment to learning about the sacred uses of tobacco. As a child, he understood the dangers of tobacco abuse and spoke out with peers and family at every opportunity. There is an understanding in Native Cultures that our children have a closer connection to spiritual truths. With Kai, he understood the power of air and breath. Through this campaign, he learned that one person’s actions can make a difference in a community. The “Honor what is Sacred” campaign ran advertisements in local papers and placed billboards in various communities served by the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. The response to these postings was unexpected. The campaign reached out to community members who were not necessarily tribal members.

As a testament to Kai, community members have expressed how much it meant to them to see him representing this message. There is something visceral about the image that transcends cultural identity. He has impacted a population who in most instances do not identify with anti-smoking. From cutting out advertisements to sharing with others how they know Kai, the general community has expressed how important it was for them to see someone they considered of their own community representing this message. Kai is presently working with Project SPIT a comprehensive tobacco control program and his SWAT leader Wendy DeWitt to encourage his junior high alma mater to become the next 24/7 tobacco free campus in Pushmataha County. According to Ms. DeWitt, “he is an asset to our local Antlers SWAT team and a leader that stands out among his peers. This youth represents a special balance of commitment to the honoring of the mind, body, spirit and to that sacred responsibility of service to one’s community!!!