

THE DAILY ARDMOREITE

Posted: Nov. 22, 2015 at 8:45 AM

By: Melanie Plemons

No Smoking

Smoking is a hot issue, between restaurants and public places banning it to the controversy of E-cigs being allowed. Local activists and organizations are advocating for no smoking due to the side effects and health dangers.

Oklahoma Turning Point is one of these agencies. They are calling for all local citizens and community leaders to help establish a healthier Carter County. The organization focuses on increasing awareness, identifying barriers, strengthening and developing partnerships and providing resources.

“I’ve been involved with the Turning Point Coalition for over 10 years now, partly because this organization brings together people from all over the community with all associated health needs,” Tobi Daniel Ervin, executive director of United Way for South Central Oklahoma explained. “The coalition itself is made up of multiple teams of people who are working on specific issues ... To me it’s something to be very proud of for this community that this continues on and has for so many years now.”

Local students have also gotten involved through a branch of Turning Point called Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT), which operates through the Wilson Boys and Girls Club.

“They’re active in policy change and advocating for mostly no tobacco on school premises and out in the public. The most recent thing we did was help the city get all of the changes that they had to get the grants that they had,” Amy Miller, Boys and Girls Club worker and SWAT director explained. “Wilson received a \$20,000 community incentive grant to help beautify the community and SWAT helped get that. They were an integral part in helping get that. They did that by helping pass initiatives like the clean air initiatives. They helped the mayor pass initiatives for no smoking on all city properties. They’ve gone out and picked up cigarette butts around businesses and things like that. They make posters to raise awareness. They’ve hosted events; it’s endless.”

Funded by the Tobacco Endowment Settlement Trust, these students are trying to raise awareness and make the community cleaner and healthier, themselves healthier and learn something at the same time.

“Our older SWAT kids, they’re really good about going down to our younger elementary school kids and teaching them this information,” Miller added. “It’s not even about just smoking cigarettes or dipping snuff because there’s so many new things these days. The E-cigarettes that have come out, they’re learning that they’re just as dangerous, if not worse. Even the ones that don’t have the nicotine in them, they’re dangerous and they (kids) don’t realize. They’re learning and I’m learning that people put things in there (E-cigs) that don’t need to be in there.”



Smoking is a hot issue. Numbers of smokers in Oklahoma are way down, but the state still has one of the highest smoking rates in the nation. Local organizations, including students, are working toward cessation.