

The Winston Man

It's all a matter of common sense and logic.

Dave Goerlitz, known as "The Winston Man" in the 1980s, was at S. Arch Thompson Auditorium Friday to speak to sixth, seventh and eighth grade students from around the county about the dangers of tobacco use.

Goerlitz was featured in 42 of the cigarette ads called the "Search and Rescue" series. He spoke in front of a Power-Point display that featured him in several of these ads.

A smoker for 24 years, he says he knows about the dangers of tobacco use and how tobacco companies try to control its customers.

"Tobacco companies try to take away your goals and dreams when you are young," he told the students. "When people tell you to do something you don't want to do and you know it's bad, don't do it. Use your common sense."

He pointed out the big tobacco companies target ages 11 to 15. "Ninety-three percent start tobacco use under the age of 14," he said. "That's what I'm concerned about.

"It's rare for an adult to start smoking. This smoking thing is a teenage function that you hold onto when you're an adult."

The reason the tobacco companies target this age group is because it is one of the most difficult times in a person's life, Goerlitz said.

"In sixth and seventh grades, I was a child of bulk. I was huge. I weighed 233 pounds. And the old saying about names will never hurt you? Names hurt you," he added.

He began smoking at the age of 13 because of this and other stress in his life. By the time he was an adult, he smoked three packs a day.

As "The Winston Man," Goerlitz said his job was to make tobacco products look good. "It's macho, rugged. My job was to get you to smoke."

He noted tobacco companies know males and females are different. "That's why there are 258 brands of death," on the market. There are 4,762 chemicals and gases in tobacco and 64 of those chemicals cause cancer, he added. "Bottled water is more regulated than tobacco products," he said.

Standing in front of one of his old ads, Goerlitz pointed to the warning label at the bottom. "Would you buy any other product with a warning label on it? 'Warning, this shampoo can cause your hair to fall out.' No, you wouldn't."

"Tobacco companies are brilliant in what they do. They sell tobacco by making it look good and sound better," he said.

Companies also sell candy cigarettes and bubble gum chewing tobacco to your children. "It's like a Fisher-Price version of a wet bar for six-year-olds. We wouldn't do that but we'll give candy cigarettes to a child."

"You are targeted with 15 billion dollars of images that you want to use tobacco as you pass through that window of opportunity.

“Use your common sense. You don’t need tobacco in your life. There’s not one of you who’s better than anybody else. No one is superior. You’re all in this life together. Have a ball but don’t succumb to tobacco companies.”

There were 884 students from Parker Intermediate Center, Puterbaugh Middle School, Lakewood Christian School, Hartshorne, Frink-Chambers, Crowder and Haywood at the event.

The assembly was held as part of “Kick Butts Day,” sponsored by Students Working Against Tobacco and the Southeast Tobacco Free Oklahoma Coalition.

Contact Teresa Atkerson at family@mcalesternews.com.