

Guymon DAILY HERALD

Tobacco sale compliance 100 percent in Texas County

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By: Submitted Report

Youth volunteers and staff from Northwest Center for Behavioral Health Regional Prevention Coordinator (formerly the Area Prevention Resource Center) recently conducted Reward Reminder Visits in Cimarron and Texas County communities.

A black rectangular logo with a white border containing the text "TOBACCO STOPS WITH ME." in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. The word "ME." is in red.

Checks were done in the communities of Boise City, Keyes, Tyrone, Hooker, Guymon, Goodwell and Texhoma.

Clerks in all but two stores visited verified the age of the youth volunteer by asking to see ID, and did not sell tobacco products to them. One store clerk did not ask for an ID, and would have completed the sale had the register not required a valid birth date.

One store clerk did not have that protection on their register, and completed the sale without asking for birth date or ID.

Reward Reminder Visits are also referred to as Tobacco Compliance Checks. These are visits that are conducted at retailers that sell tobacco products, to ensure that tobacco is not being sold to minors. The Regional Prevention Coordinator conducts random tobacco checks where tobacco products are sold, utilizing a youth volunteer who is under 18 years of age.

During these checks the minor is accompanied into the store where he or she attempts to purchase a tobacco product. If the clerk proceeds to attempt to sell to the minor, the RPC staff person informs them that they are illegally selling tobacco to a youth who is underage. If the clerk requests an ID and refuses a sale, they are praised by the staff member and given a card thanking them for not selling to a minor.

In either case, the clerk is asked to provide his/her name and the name of the store manager. The store's manager is then notified by letter whether the clerk did or did not sell tobacco. Some stores provide their own reward to their compliant employees, such as buying their dinner or other indicators of appreciation.

The Reward Reminder Visits do not have the legal implications that the Oklahoma Alcoholic Beverage Laws Enforcement Commission has, but rather could be viewed as a "trial run" for ABLE Agents, who regularly conduct their own tobacco checks. The information gathered by the RPC staff during these checks is reported to the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services Prevention Services, who work closely with the ABLE Commission.

If retailers are interested in receiving helpful tips for selling tobacco products, they can contact the Regional Prevention Coordinator at 580-571-3240. If anyone suspects that tobacco laws are being violated, they can report the suspected violations to 1-866-894-3517.