

February 02, 2012

14 OVX Groups to Rally At State House to Highlight Dangers of Secondhand Smoke

Members of 14 OVX (Our Voices Xposed) groups, a youth-led, youth-run movement focused on exposing the truth about tobacco, will gather at the State House in Montpelier on Thursday, Feb. 2 to alert the public and legislators to the dangers associated with exposure to secondhand smoke in parks, beaches, multi-unit housing and cars.

According to the U.S. Surgeon General, there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke.

Some of the OVX members are expected to wear hazardous material (HazMat) suits signifying the dangers non-smokers face daily when confronted with tobacco smoke. OVX groups, working with community partners to educate and encourage local policy change, have helped to create smoke-free zones in their own communities. For example, the OVX group in Enosburg was involved in getting a smoke-free parks ordinance passed.

The OVX rally will begin at 9:30 a.m., followed by presentations to legislators inside the State House. Students from OVX groups at the following organizations and schools are expected to attend:

- Boys & Girls Club of Rutland Burdett Commons of Arlington
- Burlington High School
- Champlain Valley Union High School (Hinesburg)
- Concord High School
- Enosburg Falls High School
- Green Mountain Union High School (Chester)
- Milton Community Youth Coalition
- Richford Junior-Senior High School
- The Collaborative (Londonderry)
- Twin Valley High School (Wilmington)
- Windsor High School

- Winooski High School
- Woodstock Union High School

OVX members are speaking out because secondhand smoke has an impact on their lives. According to the most recent Youth Risk Behavior (YRBS) survey, 41 percent of students reported that in the previous week that they had been in the same room with someone who was smoking, and 31 percent reported being in the same car with someone who was smoking.

The YRBS survey also showed that 13 percent of students said that they had smoked in the past 30 days. The percentage of youth smokers is down significantly from 18 percent in 2009, and more than three times lower than the high of 40 percent in 1995. Although youth smoking has declined, there still are some who smoke – and all face potential exposure from secondhand smoke in public areas, homes and cars.

“We’re incredibly proud of the progress Vermont youth have made to eliminate tobacco smoke from their lives, but they still are exposed to the dangers of secondhand smoke,” said Eoana Sturges, the Vermont Department of Health’s coordinator for OVX groups. “Youth from around Vermont are gathering at the State House and meeting with legislators to demonstrate the importance of smoke-free zones to protect all of us from secondhand smoke.”

February also marks the kick-off of the annual youth tobacco prevention campaign. The Vermont Department of Health, along with OVX groups and community partners, reaches out to teens (14-17 years old) who are considering smoking or may have tried smoking, but are not yet addicted to stop now.

Two television commercials – “Meet Your Insides” and “Quit While You’re Ahead” <http://ovx.org/listen-your-gut/watch-commercials> – featuring the characters Lungs, Stomach and Brain, show teens that just because they have tried smoking, that doesn’t make them smokers. Teens say that they don’t want to become smokers, and that if they follow what they feel inside, what they call their “gut feelings,” that they won’t. These spots remind them that even if they’ve tried smoking, they can still quit while they’re ahead.

Additional outreach for the “Listen to Your Gut” educational campaign includes the chance to make your own animated story – starring Lungs, Stomach or Brain – with sound effects that can be shared with friends (www.ovx.org/listen-your-gut/spill-your-guts), banner ads and Facebook activities.

“We can learn a lot from the passion of youth who want to change the world,” said Health Commissioner Harry Chen, MD. “We’re proud of the work that the OVX groups are doing around the state to encourage teens not to smoke, and helping protect all of us from the dangers of secondhand smoke.”

To learn more about OVX or to find the support available for teens who want to quit smoking, visit www.ovx.org. OVX is a youth-led component of Vermont's comprehensive tobacco control and prevention program.

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