



Anti-Vaping “Human Billboard” Contest Winner Announced

TROY, Mich., Jan. 12, 2021 – The Alliance of Coalitions for Healthy Communities held an anti-vaping t-shirt design contest in late 2020 thanks to a \$1,000 mini-grant from Tobacco-Free Michigan. Tobacco-Free Michigan put out a call for innovative projects to engage youth in the tobacco free movement and reduce the impact that tobacco has on public health of Oakland County. Justin Kakuda, senior at Avondale High School, submitted the winning design.

“Youth vaping is on the rise and has proven to have severe health outcomes to youth as evidenced by Daniel Ament, a 17-year-old double lung transplant recipient from Grosse Pointe, Mich.,” said Julie Brenner, president & CEO, Alliance of Coalitions for Healthy Communities. “By bringing awareness to the acceptance of vaping among youth and increasing the positive anti-vaping messaging, we can have a positive impact on the perceived risk and harm of youth vaping. Our long term goal is to reduce the number of youth vaping.”

Peers Educating and Empowering Peers (PEEPs), a youth initiative of the Alliance of Coalitions for Healthy Communities, developed and submitted the idea to create a “Human Billboard” t-shirt design contest engaging Oakland County youth in 6th through 12th grade. The Alliance asked teens to create anti-vaping messaging to be put on t-shirts, worn as wearable, human billboards to increase awareness of the dangers of youth vaping.

This project engaged youth from a network of 21 Community Prevention Coalitions across Oakland County who collaborate to provide prevention services in their local communities. These coalitions work to promote healthy lifestyles and good decision making through prevention education.

The Alliance’s professional graphic design team created a t-shirt with the winning design submitted by Kakuda. More than 100 t-shirts will be distributed to local youth by the Alliance’s 21 community coalition affiliates to create awareness soon.

“The main reason I entered the contest is because I have seen how vaping can take a hold of your life. While it may not seem too evident, the financial and physical toll it takes on a person is something that I wouldn’t wish upon anyone,” said Kakuda. “The anti-vaping campaign is important because vaping takes you down a path for poor lung health in the future.”

Teens who participated in the competition are encouraged to take photos featuring their shirt in various locations with the hashtag #PEEPThis and share their photos on social media. The Alliance and its Coalition network will also share these photos on social media to further increase awareness of the dangers of youth vaping by sharing images of youth wearing the final t-shirt design.

According to the 2020 Michigan Profile for Healthy Youth Survey (MIPHY), 43.3% of students in the 7th, 9th, and 11th grade in Oakland County used an electronic vapor product. According to a 2019 report by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA), more than five million, or 28%



of high school students reported nicotine vaping. This is an increase from 2018 (21%) and more than double the rates in 2017 (12%).

The Alliance actively works with teens throughout the year. In the fourth quarter of 2020, created a video PSA featuring 21 high school students from across Oakland County who pledged to [Stay Above the Influence](#).

About the Alliance of Coalitions for Healthy Communities

The Alliance of Coalitions for Healthy Communities is a substance misuse prevention and wellness organization that supports a 21-coalition prevention partnership in Oakland County serving more than 55 local communities and provides Shatter the Stigma: Family & Recovery Support and education groups for anyone affected by substance misuse. Predominantly funded by Oakland Community Health Network, the Alliance also provides free Narcan training. The Alliance connects, strengthens, and mobilizes strategic partners to promote healthier communities. Visit www.achcmi.org for more information. For more information, please call 248.221.7101. Follow us on social media on @allianceofcoalitions on Facebook and Instagram and @ACHCMichigan on Twitter. The Alliance recently moved to its new headquarters – 5505 Corporate Drive Suite 301, Troy, MI 48098.

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