



Statewide Youth Movement Against Tobacco Use

Regional Boards Program Summary November 2003-November 2004

Introduction/Background

Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States. Eighty-eight percent of all smokers start before age 18. When youth programs are a part of a comprehensive tobacco use prevention program, tobacco use attitudes and behaviors are changed. Although the Federal government has undertaken a number of critical activities to curb tobacco use, State and local community action is required to ensure the success of tobacco control interventions. To this end, TASK was established.

Initially formed in 1998 as an offshoot of the Tobacco Free Kansas Coalition, TASK has evolved into an independent entity heavily involved with the prevention of Kansas' teen tobacco use. "TASK promotes tobacco free teens by uniting communities to create one strong voice standing against the tobacco industry." TASK assists local groups with becoming established TASK Companies through the distribution of mini-grants, including outreach grants intended to help minority students get involved. Local youth groups work to inform teens of big tobacco manipulation and further the TASK mission of reducing teen tobacco use in Kansas. TASK also plans and implements the Smoke-Free Teens Are Rising (STAR) Rallies, the Youth Summit, Supernova Rally, TASK Van Tours and statewide media campaign, all of which are designed to spread the TASK message throughout Kansas.

Funding

TASK is funded by a grant from the American Legacy Foundation. The American Legacy Foundation was formed as a result of the tobacco master settlement with states and seeks to counter the messages youth receive from the tobacco industry. Kansas was one of 17 states funded by Legacy for youth empowerment initiatives.

Methods

To better link the state board and local TASK companies, three TASK Regional Boards were formed in 2003: West, Central, and East. The Regional Boards offer youth an opportunity to be involved in leadership roles on a broader basis. In collaboration with the Tobacco Free Kansas Coalition, TASK contracted with one consultant in each of the three regions to serve as adult sponsors/advisors for each Regional Board to support the TASK message.

Results

During the first contract period, the focus of each Regional Board was youth recruitment and developing an action plan for future projects. The second contract period consisted of the implementation of projects and activities. To date, the Regional Boards have been instrumental in the development and implementation of the following initiatives:

- Design and production of 5 parade kits with various tobacco prevention messages (to be used by local youth groups)
- Design, production, and distribution of Great American Smoke Out materials, utilized by 22 schools
- Operation Sitting Duck at a local restaurant to promote smoke free dining.

The TASK Regional Boards have also participated in the communication process by contributing to the TASK state newsletter, website (www.kstask.org), and participating in statewide conference calls.

Future

TASK plans to continue to expand the Regional Coalitions in 2005. Recruitment will continue to be a focus for all 3 regions. Other future actions include:

- Presenting and/or assisting the TASK state board with the 2005 Rallies
- Designing materials to be used for Kick Butt's Day
- Sponsoring a national speaker to present at strategic locations throughout each region.

As funding sources change, TASK is planning for the future by establishing a sustainability committee made up of youth and adult partners. This committee is actively researching Best Practices established in other states, searching for grant opportunities, and establishing a list of potential community and state partners/sponsors. The committee identified the Regional Coalitions as a key component in the future of TASK.

For more information about TASK, please visit: www.kstask.org.

