

AREA TEENS 'KICK BUTTS'

March 16, 2017

Freemont Ross High School students help promote campaign to end smoking

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REPORTER

FREMONT - Students at Fremont Ross High School were "Kicking Butts" at every opportunity Wednesday, stopping classmates in the hallway to promote anti-smoking messages and handing out bracelets and temporary tattoos. Some students had outlines of their hands made and taped to the wall.

Members of Ross High School's Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) and The Link Leadership groups stepped up Wednesday to work a table next to the cafeteria.

"We call them the Stand group," said Charlotte Stonerook, with the Sandusky County Health Department Tobacco Prevention program. She said about 25 students volunteered to promote a local event that is part of the "National Kick Butts Day." Stonerook partnered Wednesday with Charlotte Van Odsol from the Firelands Counseling and Recovery to set up for Wednesday's event. Susan Frye, Ross interventionist, was coordinating the students for the Fremont City Schools.

The local health department secured a \$60,000 Ohio Department of Health grant for youth smoking prevention, according to Stonerook. She said Wednesday's project is the first of several anti-smoking events that will involve the Ross students.

"Kick Butts Day" focuses attention on how tobacco companies entice youths with flavored products such as e-cigarettes and cigars. More than 1,000 events were planned nationwide for "Kick Butts Day," organized by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids and held annually since 1996. Even before school started Wednesday, participating teens were donning their antismoking T-shirts and sharing items for the event. Students were drawing outlines of their hands on paper, which were then taped to the wall behind the table to show solidarity.

Junior Aliza Quick said the overall goal was to try and get youths to understand the problems associated with tobacco and avoid the temptation to use it even if others are using those products.

"It's not always right to go with the crowd," she said. Quick added that that philosophy applies to more than just cigarettes and smoking.

She said she has family members who smoke, including grandparents, has been unsuccessful trying to get them to quit.

"I think it's an old habit," she said. Quick was one of the Ross students who spent part of the morning handing out bracelets promoting "Kick Butts Day."

Another junior, Jenny Brito, stopped at the table during a class change. A SADD member, Brito said she was supporting the campaign "so we can get more people to quit smoking and realize what it is doing to them."

Stonerook said this is the first year for the Smoking Prevention Grant to be used for a program at Ross. The grant runs through the school year and she plans to apply for another grant for 2017-18. She said several years ago there was a program at all the schools in Sandusky County to prevent smoking, but this is the first year under the new grant that the "Kick Butts Day" promotion was being launched at Ross.

The teens involved in the Wednesday event will have more Smoking Prevention events to tackle this spring.

“We’re doing a store audit program,” Stonerook added. Students will be going to stores in April with a list of questions to be answered about tobacco products. They also will be involved in spreading prevention information through social media.



Jenny Brito, front, puts her hand on a paper to be outlined by Miranda Palacios during “Kick Butt Day” Wednesday morning at Fremont Ross High School.

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