



Ramsey County Youth Advocates Honored as “Group Advocates of the Year” for Leadership and Advocacy in Tobacco Prevention

Teens representing the Ramsey County Student Action Team (SAT) accepted the Group Advocates of the Year award from the national organization Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids at a ceremony in Washington, D.C. on May 8, 2025. Clara Seeley of White Bear Lake, Summer Balfanz of Roseville, and Mỹ Linh Nguyễn of Arden Hills, accepted the award on behalf of the entire SAT group. The award recognizes the group's leadership in preventing nicotine addiction among their peers.

SAT youth were motivated by their experiences watching other teens begin to vape and saw how it dramatically changed their lives. They were tired of locked bathrooms and



Members of the Ramsey County Student Action Team honored in Washington D.C.

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the odor of vapes in their classrooms. They decided to do something about it and joined the SAT group to educate their peers, adults, and decision makers about the harms of nicotine and opportunities to make an impact through advocacy and policy change. “I got involved with the SAT because I didn't want to see any more people lose their lives to Big Tobacco. Change won't happen if we don't speak up,” Seeley said.

SAT activities over the past two years have included supporting tobacco policy ordinances in Vadnais Heights, Arden Hills, New Brighton and Saint Anthony Village. The group advocated for a bill at the state Capitol to end the sale of flavored commercial tobacco statewide. They spoke at Attorney General Keith Ellison's news conference celebrating a bill authored by Senator Heather Gustafson (SD 36) prohibiting the sale of

“deceptive” vapes. The group also helped conduct age-of-sale compliance checks with law enforcement and led educational presentations to middle schoolers on the harms of e-cigarettes and other tobacco products.

“I got involved with SAT to do something beyond myself. I am most proud of our policy work to create real change, and I was most surprised about how receptive young students are to our education work,” said Nguyễn.

The SAT group is led by staff from the Association for Nonsmokers - MN and is partially funded by a grant from Saint Paul - Ramsey County Public Health through the Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) of the Minnesota Department of Health. SHIP supported partnerships are designed to create healthier systems and environments where people live, work, learn and play. A total of 21 youth from 11 communities participate in the SAT group.

A Minnesota youth group also won Group Advocates of the Year in 2010 for their advocacy to end the sale of imitation candy tobacco products and novelty lighters in the City of St. Paul.

St. Anthony Village First in Nation to set Minimum Price for Vapes

Saint Anthony Village became the first city in the state and maybe the nation to set a minimum price on vapes when they updated their tobacco ordinance on April 8, 2025. Small but mighty, they are a national leader on tobacco policy issues. They ended price discounting like “Buy One, Get One Free” as well as coupon redemption for all commercial tobacco products. They set a minimum price on cigarettes and chew, capped the number of tobacco licenses in the city at zero, and increased their penalty structure. They are the first city in the country to set a minimum price for electronic cigarettes or vapes at \$20 each.

While only 2% of youth in Minnesota use combustible tobacco products, 8.5 to 10.8% of youth vape. Young people are particularly vulnerable to price discounts and promotions. An ordinance that prevents price discounts of vape products is an important tool for protecting youth from the harms of commercial tobacco.

The zero license cap means no new licenses will be issued, but existing vendors can continue to sell tobacco products as long as they maintain their license.

The measure passed with a 4-0 vote and strong support from the mayor and council members. Mayor Webster expressed the value of this ordinance saying, “I think about this as being the next step in reducing youth access to tobacco.” Council Member Elnagdy affirmed, “Clearly seeing the impact of some simple regulations and the difference they can make in our youth is super powerful.”

Thank you to everyone who emailed, called, testified, sent a letter of support, attended a council meeting, and spread the word about this ordinance. Your voice matters in creating important public health policy change!



ANSR Staff and Advocates celebrating a win in St. Anthony Village

Registration Open for Program Sharing Conference

MPRC is hosting the 51st annual MN Prevention Program Sharing Conference this October, and registration is open now for attendees and exhibitors. Each year, the conference brings individuals together across sectors. From community coalitions, government, and nonprofits, to parents, youth, and educators—the work of preventing substance misuse intersects with areas across public health, education, advocacy, mental health, and more! Don't miss your chance to join us in October for learning, networking and skill-building opportunities.

This year's conference theme, "Moving Upstream: Strengthening Connections and Cultivating Hope in Prevention", will highlight our focus on the risk and protective factors that influence substance use, provide opportunities to build connections between all sectors of our work, and invite hope as we look forward together. You can find general information about the conference at mnprc.org/conference.



Take Down Tobacco Days

Ramsey County student groups hosted Take Down Tobacco Days at their schools in April. The event at White Bear Lake Area High School kicked off with students gathering postcards and encouraging classmates to send a message to the tobacco industry through a large poster. The event was followed by two weeks of reminders in the school announcements, the "WBL Roar", posters around the school, and distributing quit kits.

Students from Wash Tech Escapes the Vape (WETV) hosted a table over lunch periods and encouraged peers to sign advocacy posters for federal delegates, demanding action on the fight against the tobacco industry. Students also answered trivia questions and signed a banner with the reason they want to take down tobacco. WETV interacted with hundreds of middle and high school students and staff, and they had 75 postcards signed!



Left: WETV booth for Take Down Tobacco Day

Right: Take Down Tobacco Day at White Bear Lake Area High School

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State Advocacy Update

ANSR and TFA brought several groups of students and advocates to the state capitol this year. All student groups highlighted the dangers of flavored commercial tobacco products and the urgent need to end their sale, emphasizing how these products are designed to attract and addict young people. By sharing their personal stories and advocating for stronger policies, these youth leaders are making a powerful impact in the fight for a healthier future.



Hastings Middle and High School youth advocates at the State Capitol

Hastings Middle & High School ~ Twenty students from Hastings Middle and High Schools visited the Capitol on April 4, 2025 to educate their legislators about the importance of ending the sale of flavored commercial tobacco products in Minnesota. They shared powerful stories with Rep. Tom Dippel (41B) and Sen. Judy Seeberger (41) about how flavored commercial tobacco products have impacted them, their peers, and their families.

Ramsey County Student Action Team ~ Eight high school students from the Ramsey County Student Action Team visited the Minnesota State Capitol on February 26, 2025 to share their stories and speak with

their legislators about how commercial tobacco affects them, their friends, families, and communities as well as the great work they have accomplished as a group. They met with Rep. Brion Curran (36B), Rep. Leigh Finke (66A) and Rep. Kelly Moller (40A), toured the Governor's Reception Room, and met with the Governor's legislative aid.



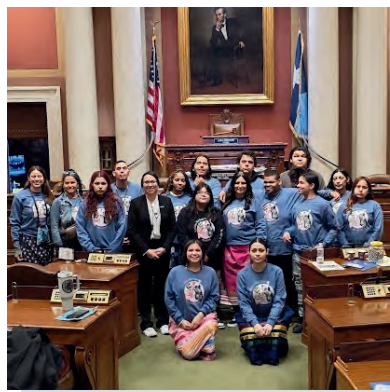
Members of the Ramsey County Student Action Team in Governor's Reception Room



Eagan High School youth advocates in the house chambers

Eagan High School ~ Ten students from Eagan High School's Youth Advocates for Prevention Policy (YAPP) group went to the Capitol on April 9, 2025 to advocate for ending the sale of flavored commercial tobacco in Minnesota. These students had the opportunity to meet with Rep. Liz Reyer (52A), Rep. Bianca Virnig (52B), and Rep. John Huot (56B), and left a packet for Sen. Erin Maye Quade (56). They serendipitously ran into Rep. Ethan Cha (47B), the lead author on last year's flavors bill, who was excited to celebrate their hard work.

Indigenous People's Task Force ~ Fourteen young people, under the guidance of Suzanne Nash, Tobacco & E-Cigs Prevention Programs Manager at the Indigenous Peoples Task Force, visited the Capitol on April 3, 2025 to advocate for ending the sale of flavored commercial tobacco in Minnesota. The students met with Rep. Fue Lee (59A), Rep. John Huot (56B), Sen. President Bobby Joe Champion (59), Rep. Melissa Hortman (34B), and Rep. Heather Keeler (04A). This student group is part of the Waybinagay Program, a culturally specific prevention and cessation program for Native American youth and young adults ages 11-26, focusing on commercial tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs. Waybinagay participants receive information, skills, cultural teachings, and ceremony through an 8-session curriculum. The program also provides access to cultural activities through evening events and social support for quitting.



*Youth advocates from
Indigenous People's
Task Force in the
House chambers*
→

Washington Technology Magnet High School ~ Eight Washington Technology Magnet High School students from Wash Escapes the Vape visited the Minnesota State Capitol on February 27, 2025 to share their stories and speak with their legislators about youth tobacco prevention. Students met with Sen. Majority Leader Erin Murphy (64), Sen. Sandra Pappas (65), Sen. Assistant Majority Leader Clare Omou Verbeten (66), Rep. Samakab Hussein (65BA) and Rep. Athena Hollins (66B). The students also saw an active legislative session and visited the Youth Voices exhibit on display on the ground level of the capitol.



*Members of Wash
Escapes the Vape
in front of the
State Capitol*
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ANSR staff at the MN Commercial Tobacco Conference



ANSR Staff at the Minnesota Commercial Tobacco Conference

Local and national experts presented on basic prevention messaging and emerging topics at the Minnesota Commercial Tobacco Conference hosted by the Minnesota Department of Health in April, the first such conference in many years. With most in-person meetings vanishing because of COVID 19, this was the first time many people across the state who are working on tobacco use prevention actually met. ANSR staff presented on topics including advocacy strategies in commercial tobacco prevention, price discounting, nicotine-free generation, smoke free-housing, prevention messaging, youth engagement, programmatic frameworks, and vape waste. A conference highlight for many attendees addressed the complex issues of cannabis legalization and how it impacts tobacco policy and initiatives. [See a full list of sessions from this year's conference on the MDH website.](#) An amusing juxtaposition was a Philip Morris sponsored conference on another floor of the conference center.