Winter 2023-24 Edition

BREATHE FREE

A Quarterly Newsletter of Tobacco Free ALLEN COUNTY

October 17 Nico-Teen event panel discussion, moderated by Tamara Files

2024: A Landscape of Opportunities

Ready or not, 2024 is here! Ahead lie many opportunities in the work to end commercial tobacco use. In February, we will launch the 2024 Tobacco Retailer Assessments to document industry marketing practices in our community. With 214 stores to audit, this group project relies heavily on coalition and community help for success (see p. 5). We will also be working with local schools this spring to address youth vaping. Our task is to support schools to implement effective and just measures of accountability to replace mere punishment, which so often only intensifies youth use. When teens are educated about industry tactics targeting them and the impact on their health and well-being, and when their nicotine dependence is recognized and treated, they become equipped to resist the highly addictive drug disguised as candy-like. Our community would benefit from trained Tobacco Treatment Specialists (TTS) to offer expert guidance to these youth. Here, opportunity awaits! An affordable, 3-day TTS training from statewide partner, ReThink Tobacco Indiana is coming this spring. Stay tuned and join us in this work!

Nancy Cripe, Executive Director/Coalition Coordinator

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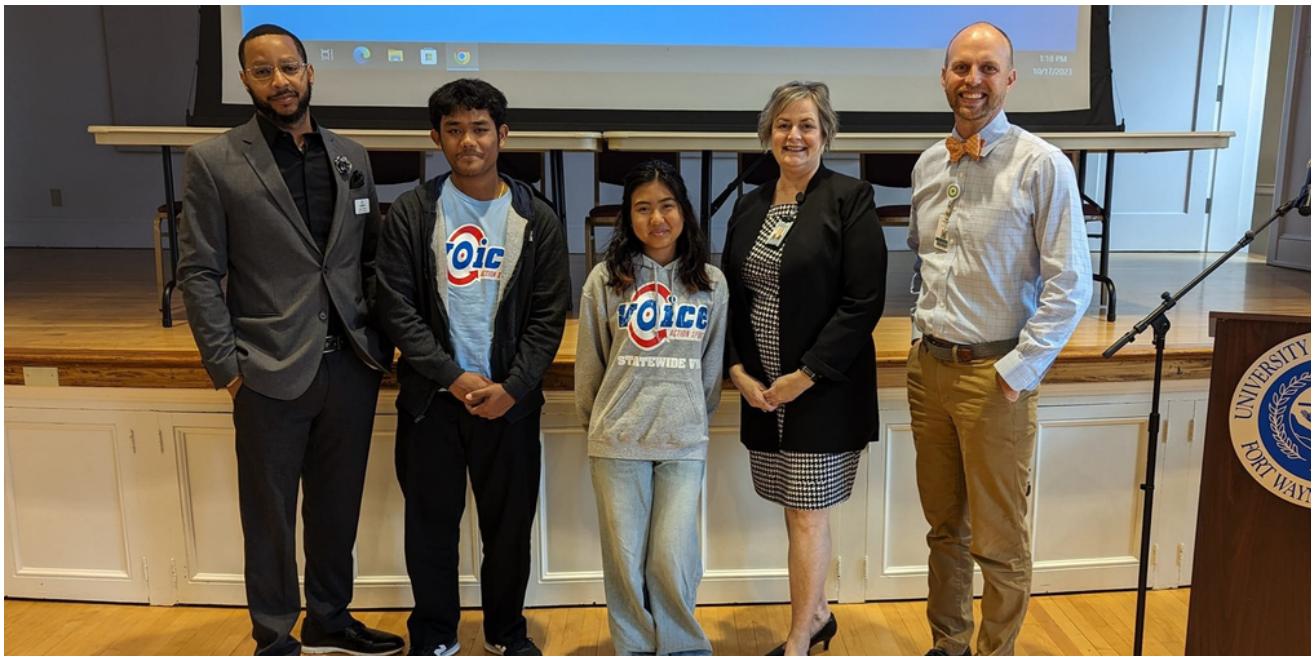
NICO-TEEN EVENT RECAP

In October, TFAC partnered with Great KIDS make Great COMMUNITIES and the Indiana Department of Health Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Commission (IDOH-TPC) to host a listening session and professional training on youth tobacco use, called *Nico-Teen: Is Big Tobacco Hijacking Youth Well-Being?* held at the Historic Women's Club. The event kicked off with a presentation by IDOH-TPC Epidemiologist Brandy Paul of the current picture of Hoosier youth tobacco use as portrayed by results from the 2022 Indiana Youth Tobacco Survey (IYTS).

Following Brandy's presentation, TFAC Coalition member and Wellness Consultant, Tamara Files, MA, BSN, RN facilitated a panel discussion with teen leaders, Mi Htaw and Nay Soe of Allen County VOICE's Core Leaders' Team; Melissa Richards, Director of Well-Being and Alternative Programs at Fort Wayne Community Schools; Parkview Pediatrician Dr. Tony GiaQuinta, Jason Jordan, Director of Teen Programming at the Jim Kelly Career Pathway Center, Boys & Girls Club of Fort Wayne; and Monique Johnson, Interim CEO/President of Allen County Drug and Alcohol Consortium. Panelists agreed that open communication is key when talking to youth about tobacco and that youth need more support from health professionals, families, and schools to overcome nicotine addiction.

Lynda Nguyen, TFAC Youth Coordinator with youth panelists, Mi Htaw and Nay Soe, Allen County VOICE Core Team Leaders

The event concluded with roundtable discussions, in which all attendees had a chance to share resources, concerns, and needs related to the issues. At least 60 professionals from youth-serving sectors as diverse as the juvenile justice system, foster care, education, and mental health attended this successful event.



Five of the panelists, from left to right: Jason Jordan, Nay Soe, Mi Htaw, Melissa Richards and Dr. Tony GiaQuinta Not pictured: Monique Johnson

MEET OUR ALLEN COUNTY VOICE YOUTH AMBASSADOR

Name: Mi Htaw
Grade: 9th
School: Northrop High School
Extracurriculars:
Cheerleading and Track
Reason for joining VOICE:
"I wanted to make a difference for my peers and to spread awareness about the tobacco industry and how they harm people."

VOICE is Recruiting!

We are looking for driven Core Leaders to join our team. As a Core Leader, youth are responsible for working with their team to plan and execute quarterly events, as well as recruit their own Action Squad team to participate in those events.

Benefits of Joining:

- Get free training and travel
- Make new friends across state
- Develop leaderships skills
- Gain advocacy skills

Please email Lynda: dlnguyen@tobaccofree02.org

TFAC COALITION, STAFF MEMBERS RECOGNIZED AT DIGNITY AWARDS CEREMONY

HealthVisions Midwest-Fort Wayne (HVM FW) celebrated the organization's 25 years of service at a ReThinking Health Celebration and Fundraiser on September 29 at the Grand Wayne Center. At the event, two TFAC staff, Director Nancy Cripe and Outreach and Education Coordinator, Pat Turner, as well as a TFAC coalition member, Allen County WIC Director, Tiann Aughinbaugh were recognized as 2023 Dignity Award nominees. The annual Dignity Awards honor those who provide service to the community that contributes to others' overall health while showing dignity and respect for all.

We offer our heartfelt congratulations to Tiann for winning an award in the Individual category in recognition of her generous-spirited and unflagging dedication to relieving food insecurity in our community. Well deserved, Tiann!

L to R: Dignity Award nominees Nancy Cripe, TFAC Director, and Pat Turner, TFAC Outreach and Education Coordinator; HealthVisions Midwest-Fort Wayne Executive Director, Sharon Tubbs; Dr. Marsha King, HealthVisions Midwest Board Chair; and Felicia Say, HVM-FW Office Manager and HEAL Coordinator

Pictured above: Coalition member Tiann Aughinbaugh, recipient of the 2023 Dignity Award

COALITION SPOTLIGHT

Heather Sittler, CWP, CWWPC, Senior Health Strategist at Hylant works with companies to implement strategic wellness programs that promote employee health and well-being. A member of the TFAC coalition since 2008, she is one of our longest-serving members. She believes that addressing tobacco use is good not just for people; it's good for business. When not working, Heather indulges her love for gaming. She has been playing a tabletop, role-playing game with close friends for over two decades! We are incredibly grateful for Heather's dedication and expertise!

We are seeking volunteers to help conduct the 2024 Allen Co. Tobacco Retailer Assessments between Feb 15 and April 15.

For more info or to sign up, text or email Nancy at 260-760-7555
ncripe@tobaccofree02.org

Thank you in advance! We can't do this important work without you!

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR 2024 TOBACCO RETAILER ASSESSMENTS

Every two years, TFAC collaborates with the Indiana Department of Health Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Commission and national non-profit, Counter Tools, to conduct local Tobacco Retailer Assessments. This project provides valuable data documenting the tobacco industry's point-of-sale marketing tactics in our community, including interior and exterior ad placement, product availability patterns, pricing, and promotions. Stores surveyed include gas stations, tobacco and vape shops, mass merchandise and liquor stores.

TFAC is seeking multiple volunteers and volunteer teams to assist with the 2024 assessments, which will run February 15 to April 15 and will include over 200 stores. Each assessment generally takes about 15 minutes to complete and can be alone or in pairs, at a time of the assessor's choosing. Previous participants have found this project eye-opening, providing invaluable insight into how youth and marginalized populations are targeted for addiction.

An online group training will be provided (recorded for those unable to attend the live version). Please contact Nancy at ncripe@tobaccofree02.org or 260-760-7555 (call or text) if you can help.

Tobacco ads strategically hung above the candy in a Fort Wayne convenience store.

A gauntlet of flavored vape ads awaits middle schoolers stopping by this convenience store from their school across the street.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Freedom from Smoking® 7-week Virtual Group Classes

Option 1: Jan 10 and meets weekly on Wednesdays from 1-3pm. Quit Day is January 31.

Option 2: Jan 15 and meets weekly on Mondays from 5-7pm. Quit day is February 5.

For more info or to register for a class, call 260-266-6500.

Please note that instructors can walk participants through the process of getting into virtual meetings.

SAVE THE DATE

Upcoming TTS Trainings:

May 8-10, 2024

Oct 23-25, 2024

Click **HERE** for more info

Want to get involved in our work? Join our Coalition! We currently meet the 2nd Wednesday of every month at noon. If you are already a member, please spread the word about us!

Welcome

New Members

MAY

Keyonia Cox
Cancer Services of NE IN

Lauren Tosland
Mathew 25 Health & Care

JUNE

Brandi Schorey
Anthem BCBS

Denise Robinson
PPG OBGYN - Carew

AUGUST

Desiree Allen
Stance LLC

SEPTEMBER

Jill Hartman
Hearten House Gospel Rescue Mission

Kim Eldridge
United Healthcare

Yolette Blanks
Redemption House

OCTOBER

Erika Woodward
VA, Northern Indiana

Christina Sanchez
DAC and The Brave Alliance

Olivia Keim & Danyel Walker
The Lighthouse