

NO BUTTS ABOUT IT! PROJECT EXPANSION WITHIN TWO COALITIONS

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CHALLENGE:

In the West River Valley we are finding cigarette waste receptacles lacking, and those that do exist are often overflowing and too close in proximity to entrances and patrons of the establishment. According to the 2019 YRBS in Windham County, 29% of students have smoked cigarettes or cigars or used smokeless tobacco or electronic vapor products, and 51% of students in Windham County have tried to quit all tobacco products within the past year. These stats support the importance of doing community inventories/scans of the environments that those who are trying to quit are exposed to.

SUMMARY:

Deerfield Valley Community Partnership and West River Valley Thrives have been addressing the problem of cigarette butt litter. This work is thanks to the collaboration of middle/high school prevention groups, community members and local business owners. Both coalitions have played an active role in addressing the problem of toxic cigarette waste by identifying heavy litter areas and reaching out to the appropriate community members to install cigarette receptacles called Butlers. This year, our collective groups were able to expand awareness of this issue to more business owners, involving more students like Vermont Kids Against Tobacco (VKAT), Our Voices Xposed (OVX), and Boys Scouts from BSA Troop 428. Incorporating a balance of education and community intervention has made this program a growing success. Important community connections have been forged and butlers abound!

SOLUTION :

With all the proper gear to make the clean up a sanitary process, students and community members participated in Butt litter clean ups. Folks first confirmed high traffic smoking areas by collecting cigarette butts, which also improved the community outdoor spaces. Next steps included sharing what they learned about the environmental impacts of cigarette litter and how to reduce that impact by installing a Butler to collect cigarette butts. The icing on the cake is the fact that, once collected, these butts can actually be recycled by mailing them to a Vermont-based recycling organization, Terracycle. The project was publicly highlighted and results were published in the local newspaper, social media, and newsletters. The butlers include the 802 Quit hotline and our coalitions' logos to provide cessation resources broadly. DVCP and WRVT promote their use, and monitor and manage their collections.

RESULTS:

Student participation from Leland and Gray Middle and High School in the project grew from having the students participate in the butt litter clean up to student participation in the installation of the butlers at the retailer sites and speaking to the store owners directly. Jacob an OVX club student from Leland and Gray stated “I feel like the community will see what we are really about. This gives us visibility. It tells people we aren’t just about giving people resources to quit but that we care about helping our community and environment to be healthy.” The education for the project expanded from doing press releases about the project to including student led classroom presentations about the benefits of the campaign and providing materials to their 20 peers in science and health classes. One VKAT club participant from Leland and Gray named Ella stated “This was a fun project that made me feel like I was helping my community and encouraging others to take care of the environment.” In Wilmington and Dover, DVCP installed a total of 21 butlers this year and have talked to the business owners to either move existing butler locations or adding additional butlers to the sites.

SUSTAINABILITY:

This campaign is truly an all hands on deck approach to spreading prevention in our communities. Our coalitions strive to develop and strengthen our youth and community members' sense of place and power in their towns. The butt litter cleanup and butler installation are examples of folks taking the well being of their community into their own hands. This project allows us to educate and form a solution in partnership with the store owner/management and dedicated youth in the community. It also allows an opportunity and a relationship to be built that could lead to potential worksite wellness policies to be implemented.



“How can I help?”:

Learn more about how Terracycle recycles objects of all kinds into useful and beautiful things like park benches! For more information visit: www.terracycle.com

As a business...consider hosting a sidewalk butler at your site, and help us promote its use.

As a person who smokes... Please help us keep Vermont green! Help us recycle cigarette butts by using designated sidewalk butlers to dispose of your cigarettes.

Community members... become part of our “collection team” to keep cigarette butts out of the trash stream.

Contact

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