

## Parents: How YOU Can Help Keep Your Kids Tobacco-Free

In class today, your child participated in Tar Wars, an award-winning, youth tobacco-free education program of the American Academy of Family Physicians. Tar Wars is designed for fourth- and fifth-grade students and is presented by volunteer health care professionals and educators. The program consists of two components: a one-hour classroom presentation and a follow-up poster contest.

The classroom lesson adopts an effective, innovative, and interactive approach to teach students about the short-term consequences and financial implications of tobacco use, reasons why people use tobacco, and deceptive tactics used in tobacco advertising. The follow-up poster contest reinforces the Tar Wars message by encouraging students to creatively capture what they learned about being tobacco-free. Winning posters from each school's poster contest are entered in the state contest and have the opportunity to advance to the Tar Wars National Poster Contest, held annually in July.

During the classroom presentation, your child participated in the six activities listed below. Tar Wars urges you to discuss these activities with your child and ask them what they learned.

### Activity 1 – Short-Term Effects of Tobacco Use

Increases students' knowledge of the short-term effects of using tobacco products (i.e., zoo breath, stinky clothes, yellow teeth).

### Activity 2 – Straw/Breathing Exercise

Demonstrates how smoking decreases lung volume.

### Activity 3 – Financial Implications of Tobacco Use

Illustrates the cost of tobacco use over the course of one day, month, and year.

### Activity 4 – Reasons People Use Tobacco

Helps students to identify and understand the reasons people begin or continue to use tobacco products.

### Activity 5 – Tobacco and Advertising

Increases students' knowledge of how tobacco advertising attempts to influence youth to buy their products and how to think critically about tobacco advertising as well as heighten the student's awareness of the tobacco industry's marketing strategies.

### Activity 6 – Poster Contest

Reinforces the Tar Wars lesson and emphasizes the positive effects of being tobacco-free through original poster designs. You may want to ask your child's teacher about the school's poster contest entry deadlines and prizes to be awarded.

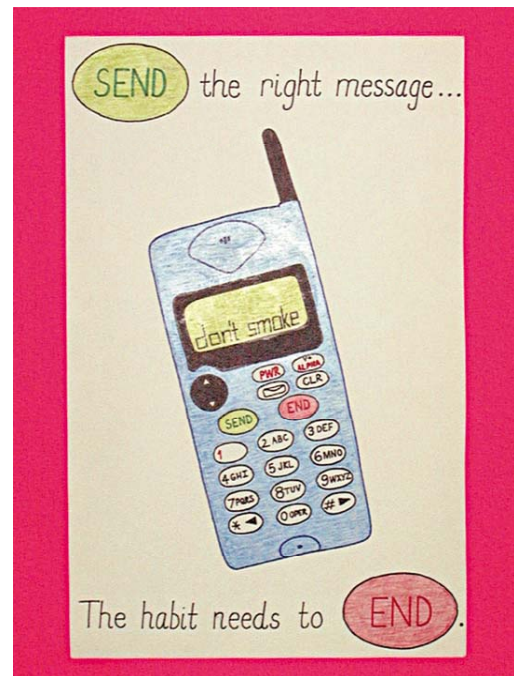
### Did you know...

...that your child will encounter the greatest risk for initiating smoking during the sixth and seventh grade? **Talking to your children – often and early – is important for sending clear and consistent messages that you do not want them using tobacco.** Be specific, concise, and reasonable when setting and enforcing rules about tobacco and drug use.

Students in grades four through six (aged 10 to 12 years) love to learn facts, especially strange and unusual ones. Having friends becomes important. This age is perhaps the most important time for parents to focus on increased drug prevention efforts.

According to a 2001 Associated Press article, "**...new research suggests teens are much less likely to smoke if they think their parents disapprove of the habit.**" Parental disapproval works even if the parents are smokers, and it can also blunt the effect of peer pressure, shown previously to be a strong influence on whether teens take up smoking....In addition, 'parents who smoked who set nonsmoking expectations for their kids...had just as much influence as parents who didn't smoke.'"

Your child will need a clear, no-use message, factual information, and a strong will to resist peer pressures to remain tobacco-free. Teach your children to be aware of how tobacco and other drugs are promoted in the media, through music and television, and other communication vehicles. Continue to practice with your child



Allison Brooke Combs — West Virginia  
2001 National Poster Contest  
Second Place

## I Pledge to be Tobacco-Free!

how to say “no” and refuse tobacco. Your children will appreciate your efforts and the interest you are showing in regard to their health and well-being.

For more information about Tar Wars, tobacco prevention, and/or how to get involved in your community, visit these Web sites:

- [www.tarwars.org](http://www.tarwars.org) (or call 800-TAR-WARS or send e-mail to [tarwars@aafp.org](mailto:tarwars@aafp.org))
- [www.tobaccofreekids.org](http://www.tobaccofreekids.org) (official Web site for the National Center for Tobacco-Free Kids)
- [www.health.org/govpubs/PHD533/index.htm](http://www.health.org/govpubs/PHD533/index.htm) (get a free copy of *Growing Up Drug Free: A Parent's Guide to Prevention*)

Tar Wars presenters stress to students that it is not their responsibility to get someone in their family to stop smoking – that's a decision each person needs to make for themselves – but that it's OK to offer support and encouragement. If you know someone who is ready to quit using tobacco, the following resources may help: <http://familydoctor.org/> (search for smoking) or [www.lungusa.org/tobacco/](http://www.lungusa.org/tobacco/).

### Take the Tobacco-Free Pledge

Children take promises very seriously. Ask your child to commit to being tobacco-free by entering into a contract with them. Consider using an incentive (i.e., money, a special trip) to reward them for remaining tobacco-free until the age of 21.

## Tobacco-Free Pledge Card

### I Pledge to be Tobacco-Free!

\_\_\_\_\_  
(your child's signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(your signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(date)

Incentive \_\_\_\_\_



American Academy  
of Family Physicians

TODAY'S FAMILY PHYSICIAN – SPECIALIZING IN ALL OF YOU.

**Tar Wars**<sup>®</sup>

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