



WILL COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT & COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER

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WILMINGTON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS SPREADING THE ANTI-TOBACCO MESSAGE

JOLIET –The Will County Health Department’s Tobacco Control and Prevention Initiative is teaming with Wilmington High School students to help educate younger children about the dangers posed by cigarettes and other tobacco products.

Vocal Wilmington High School students affiliated with Teens Against Tobacco Use (TATU) are working to insure that younger children steer clear of tobacco risks that typically generate life-long health problems. They have prepared a special anti-tobacco presentation designed specifically for 5th-graders at Stevens Intermediate School.

The high schoolers will be visiting the Stevens facility (221 Ruyan St), May 5; at 1:30 p.m. Wilmington CUSD 209-U is just one of several Will County school districts using TATU to help promote teen tobacco prevention.

“TATU is an increasingly popular program that allows students ages 14-17 to mentor youngsters about the dangers of smoking, and tobacco use in general,” according to Will County Community-Educator Jennifer Blair. “The tobacco industry concentrates marketing efforts on children because it knows that almost 90 per cent of all smokers begin before the age of 18.”

Blair knows the ropes when it comes to tobacco, and youth. She oversees the Health Department’s youth tobacco prevention initiatives.

“TATU helps to counter tobacco marketing by transforming teens from consumers to consumer advocates,” she said. “Teens seem to relish opportunities to positively influence their younger counterparts. In elementary and middle school, teen presenters from the high school setting are a refreshing departure from the traditional lessons taught by adults.”

TATU has been a presence in Wilmington schools since 2001. Wilmington 209-U employees Jack Skole and Kim Surman help make the program work by serving as TATU sponsors. Kaitlyn Kestel is the Wilmington High School TATU student President.

Will County TATU presentations have increased by more than 46 per cent during the 2009-2010 academic- year. Five Will County school districts are active TATU participants.

For more information about TATU, or other youth education initiatives sponsored by Will County Tobacco Control and Prevention, telephone 815-774-7312.



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