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New TSET Initiative Prioritizes Health of Oklahoma Youth

Statewide educational campaign helps teens struggling against tobacco use and poor nutrition

OKLAHOMA CITY (August 4, 2020) – Oklahoma youth face health challenges like never before, from the increase in teen vaping to rising rates of obesity. To help tackle these trends, the Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust (TSET) launched the TSET Healthy Youth Initiative to educate Oklahoma teens and help them make informed choices about their health.

The multifaceted statewide media campaign addresses vape and tobacco use as well as obesity among Oklahoma youth ages 13-18. The educational messages kicked off on social and digital media on August 4 and on TV, cable and radio will start on August 24.

“The TSET Board of Directors approved this project because we see the devastating effects of vape use in our own communities,” said Board Vice Chair Michelle Stephens. “And we can’t overlook the fact that youth obesity rates in Oklahoma are among the highest in the nation. Prevention is integral to producing better health outcomes for Oklahomans today and in the future.”

Tobacco use and obesity are the leading causes of preventable death in Oklahoma. The TSET Board of Directors have identified youth prevention and health improvement as a priority in their multi-year strategic plan. Earlier this year, TSET issued a request for proposal for firms who could provide expertise in youth work. In May, the TSET Board of Directors awarded a contract to Rescue Agency to develop youth prevention campaigns to counter tobacco- and obesity-related health behaviors that are putting teens at risk. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has recommended media campaigns as an effective practice in preventing and reducing tobacco use and other negative health behaviors.

The first campaigns target youth vaping and tobacco use. “Behind the Haze - Defenseless” delivers educational content exposing the truth about e-cigarettes and discouraging teens from vape use. “Down and Dirty - Teardown” is designed to change tobacco and vape-related attitudes and behaviors among rural teens. Parents can learn more by visiting the initiative’s website: TSEHealthyYouth.com.

For Oklahoma teens 13-17 who are already vaping or using tobacco, TSET provides the text-based cessation coaching of My Life, My Quit™. By visiting mylifemyquit.com or texting “Start My Quit” to 855-891-9989, teens can connect to free live texting and web chat support personalized for them. The services are confidential and do not provide nicotine patches, gum or lozenges. Some ads for the TSET Healthy Youth Initiative will also promote the cessation program. TSET also funds free quit services and resources for Oklahomans 18 and older through the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline (OKhelpline.com or 1-800-QUIT NOW).

The TSET Healthy Youth Initiative will also show teens how to avoid unhealthy empty calories and replace them with nutrient-dense fruits, vegetables and water. Currently in development, the obesity prevention campaign will complement TSET's Shape Your Future messaging. Shape Your Future encourages parents, teachers, and kids to build healthier habits – one small step at a time – by providing tons of tips, hacks and helpful resources at shapeyourfutureok.com.

“The TSET Healthy Youth Initiative is a natural extension of work we’re already doing to reduce obesity in our state. Prioritizing the younger generation is one of the most effective ways to improve health outcomes in Oklahoma,” said TSET Executive Director, Julie Bisbee. “As teens approach adulthood, they’re making more independent choices about the food they eat. It is TSET’s goal to empower Oklahoma youth to have healthy habits for a lifetime.”

The obesity prevention campaign is planned to launch early 2021.

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The TSET Healthy Youth Initiative is a statewide media effort focused on preventing and reducing tobacco use and obesity for Oklahomans ages 13-18. The initiative promotes healthy lifestyle choices for teens and gives parents resources to support their children in maintaining or developing healthy habits for a lifetime. Visit [TSET Healthy Youth Initiative](#) to learn more.

My Life, My Quit is a free program to help Oklahoma teens, ages 13 -17, quit tobacco, including e-cigarettes. Offering tools most utilized by teens, free live texting, web chat and phone calls, My Life, My Quit supports teens through the steps of quitting tobacco to be able to live tobacco free. Funded by the Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust (TSET), these free services for Oklahoma teens can be found at MyLifeMyQuit.com or by texting “Start My Quit” to 855-891-9989.

The Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline is a free service for Oklahomans wanting to help themselves, loved ones, patients or employees live tobacco free. The Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline has served nearly 00,000 Oklahomans since 2003 and has been ranked among the top quitlines for reaching tobacco users seeking treatment for the last ten years by the North American Quitline Consortium. Find out more at OKhelpline.com or 1-800 QUIT NOW.

Shape Your Future (SYF) is a community health education intervention that encourages Oklahomans to eat better, move more and be tobacco free. SYF strives to educate parents, teachers, caregivers and all Oklahomans on how to make the healthy choice the easy choice. Find us online at shapeyourfutureok.com.

The Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust (TSET) serves as a partner and bridge builder for organizations shaping a healthier future for all Oklahomans. TSET provides leadership at the intersections of health by working with local coalitions and initiatives across the state, cultivating innovative and life-changing research, and working across public and private sectors to develop, support, implement and evaluate creative strategies to take advantage of emerging opportunities to improve the public’s health. To learn more, visit TSET.ok.gov.

TSET – Better Lives Through Better Health.