

## **TSET Board of Directors Approves Youth Advocacy and Education Program**

*Initiative will focus on leadership and healthier communities.*

**OKLAHOMA CITY (Jan. 26, 2021)** – The Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust (TSET) Board of Directors is seeking to empower Oklahoma youth to improve health outcomes for future generations. Teens are facing increasing threats to good health as rates of vaping and obesity continue to climb in Oklahoma and nationally.

The TSET Board of Directors on Tuesday approved a proposal to launch a four-year youth advocacy and education program. The plan is the second phase of the TSET Healthy Youth Initiative that began this past fall with a youth-focused media campaign to educate on the risks of vapor use.

“Changing behaviors and preventing chronic disease are key to improving the health of Oklahomans, and healthy behaviors learned early last into adulthood,” said TSET Board Chair Michelle Stephens. “Creating a healthier future for Oklahoma starts with today’s youth. This program will seek out youth leaders and volunteers to advocate for policies and lead activities that will improve health for other youth and for all Oklahomans.”

Tobacco use and obesity contribute to the leading causes of preventable death in Oklahoma – heart disease and cancer. The TSET Board of Directors have identified youth prevention and health improvement as a priority in their multi-year strategic plan. The TSET Board approved a proposal from Rescue Agency, a group focusing on behavior change, to implement and manage the new program expected to launch later this year.

The program will have two main components: a youth engagement program that high school students can join, and educational and policy change activities lead by youth.

The program seeks to partner with existing high school clubs and student councils to recruit and train high-school youth in tobacco use prevention, physical activity and nutrition education activities to improve community health.

“The talents, creativity and energy of Oklahoma’s youth are an untapped resource for promoting health in our state,” said TSET Executive Director Julie Bisbee. “By empowering our young people and helping them hone their leadership skills, these young leaders will have a greater understanding of their role in creating a healthier future for Oklahoma.”

The first phase of the TSET Healthy Youth Initiative is a multifaceted statewide media campaign that addresses vapor, tobacco use and obesity among Oklahoma youth ages 13-18. The educational messages launched on TV, cable and radio in 2020.

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The [TSET Healthy Youth Initiative](#) is a statewide 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 adults resources to support children in maintaining or developing healthy habits for a lifetime.

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.

*TSET – Better Lives Through Better Health*