

TUSCARAWAS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Chris Abbuhl – Kerry Metzger – Joe Sciarretti

Young People Work to Stop Youth Tobacco Abuse

During Monday's Commissioners Meeting, Logan Kazelman and Brennan Mathias, both students of Dover High School, discussed with the Commissioners a wide array of local data exploring youth tobacco use in Tuscarawas County. One of the key issues the students pointed out was that of availability, noting that many tobacco products are just within walking distance of schools. Many of these products are not the typical cigarette, but flavored cigars or cigarillos, which can be very cheap and purchased individually. In fact, 79 percent of these stores selected sold cigarillos for one dollar or less. On a positive note the students did point out that out of ten stores selected, nine met local compliance checks and did not sell tobacco products to underage students. 61 percent of Tuscarawas County youth who identified as smokers, also identified as current drinkers, meaning that he or she consumed alcohol in the last 30 days, demonstrating the relationship between youth tobacco, alcohol, and drug abuse. As Brennan and Logan pointed out, many young people get these products from other people, as seen by the 41 percent of respondents who stated that he or she borrowed a cigarette from someone else, or the 48 percent who took a cigarette from a family member or gave money to someone old enough to purchase tobacco products for the young person. It is important to note, that tobacco products in 2018 are not just cigarettes or cigars, but now include e-cigs or JUULS, which look similar to a flash drive and can be charged on a computer or laptop.

Amy Miller, Youth Led Coordinator for Personal and Family Counseling Services, offered some different avenues to help curb youth tobacco use, the most impactful being Tobacco 21. Tobacco 21 is a nationwide effort to raise the legal age of purchasing tobacco products to 21, just as purchasing alcohol. Raising the legal age of purchasing tobacco products to age 21, will hopefully decrease the amount of young people who are exposed to these products. There are several Ohio cities that have recently adopted ordinances raising the age to purchase tobacco to 21, such as Columbus, Cleveland, Euclid, Bexley, Upper Arlington, Grandview Heights, Dublin, Powell, New Albany, and recently Akron. Other solutions included, price changes, proximity to schools, or school policy manual changes. The Commissioners were not only very receptive to the presentation, but noted the severity of the issue, and the role that all parts of society must play in curbing youth tobacco use. The Board commended the students on taking a stand on such an important issue, as well as extending a thank you to Amy Miller and Jodi Salvo who guide these youth led prevention efforts.