



Home > Health

Teen anti-smoking campaign keeps its cool

Quiet, no-pressure approach is aimed at vulnerable population



Tennie Brown, second from right a Truth campaign crew member, plays games with teenagers in front of the Truth booth at the AST Dew Tour in Soldier Field's parking lot Friday July 23, 2010. (William DeShazer, Chicago Tribune / July 28, 2010)

By Chris McNamara, Special to the Tribune

July 28, 2010

E-mail Print Share Text Size

Like You like this Be the first of your friends to like this. Admin Page Error Unlike You like this.



Surrounding the dirt bike course that was the center of the AST Dew Tour in Soldier Field's parking lot last weekend was a village of marketing booths trying to get young action sports fans to do something: Drink more Mountain Dew or join the National Guard or shop at JCPenney.

But one booth was trying to get youth to stop doing something: [smoking](#). It took a soft-sell approach toward the teens and preteens who strolled past.

Top health stories

- Sports drinks geared to intense activity
- Japanese women live longer lives
- Supplement to come off shelves



Around the Web

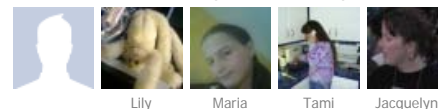
Join us on Facebook

- I Hate Swimming, I Love A Good Brick!
- Busy Life? Fuel Properly!
- How to Stay Healthy when Moving
- The Real Benefits of Exercise
- Pets help you live a Healthy Life

Chicago Tribune Living on Facebook

Like You like this. Admin Page Error Unlike You like **Chicago Tribune Living**.

298297 people like Chicago Tribune Living



"We don't want our message to be preachy," said Jocelynn Jacobs, assistant brand manager with Legacy, a nonprofit anti-smoking organization that developed the Truth campaign that targets youths ages 12 to 17. "We want message to be like your older brother giving you advice."

[Register with Chicago Tribune and receive free newsletters and alerts >>](#)

With booths, or "Truth trucks," replete with video monitors and deejay decks, they got some attention. Kids crowded around the booth, clamoring for T-shirts emblazoned with facts about the dangers of tobacco. There were no brochures, no lectures, hardly any mention of ciggies at all.

Summer months are important to get the message out because that's when most young people take their first puffs, said Jacobs. The campaign, born a decade ago in response to the tobacco industry's marketing, attempts to combat the advertising efforts of big tobacco. The goal is to convince youths that smoking isn't cool and not smoking is.

There is evidence that the approach is effective, said Joel Africk, president and CEO of the Respiratory Health Association of Metropolitan Chicago, a century-old not-for-profit that helps those with lung disease, promotes healthy lungs and assists those trying to quit smoking.

"Ninety percent of all smokers start as kids," Africk said. "If we can stop them before they start, that will have a big effect overall." The rate of teen smoking declined for many years, he said, but, "Around 2003 or 2004, it plateaued. We're trying to jump-start that so the rate declines again."

Communicating the message effectively is key to that, Africk said. Smoking's effect on the pocketbook is another significant deterrent to teen smoking, he said. Especially in Illinois, where the cigarette tax (\$3.66 combined state, county and city taxes on cigarette sales) is the second-highest in the nation, behind New York.

Still, some 3,500 children light up for the first time each day in this nation, according to the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. That adds up to more than 1.2 million new fresh-faced puffers each year.

A recent study suggests those new smokers could be hanging out at convenience stores and other retail outlets. Teens exposed to smoking ads at retailers are more likely to smoke, according to the study, by [Stanford University](#) School of Medicine and published in the July issue of the journal *Pediatrics*.

In the steamy Soldier Field parking lot last weekend, a group of peppy Truth campaign workers enlisted the young people in Simon says and a limbo contest. They persuaded one girl to spin a hula-hoop while collecting her friends' e-mail address. Male Truth campaign workers, sporting earrings and dreadlocks, buddied up to crowd members while their female counterparts managed to keep the attention of smitten boys.

True to their word, there was no heavy-handed preaching about smoking.

"We're not much older than these kids," said Sanni Youboty, 24. "We respect their opinions and decision-making."

For Sam Weir, 18, of Pittsburgh, the message may have been lost.

"They didn't really say anything about their cause at all," he said.

Michelle Maier, 21, of Chicago, said it was a good message for teens who don't smoke yet.

"It targets teens very well," she said, puffing on a cigarette while she waited for the BMX event to begin. "You hear about not smoking all the time in school," she said between drags, "but who listens to teachers?"

[Get the Chicago Tribune delivered to your home for only \\$1 a week >>](#)

Copyright © 2010, Chicago Tribune

Selected for you by a sponsor:

- [Lindsay Lohan Begins Probation Violation Jail Term](#) (*CNN Entertainment*)
- [More Cancer-Causing Chemicals in U.S. Cigarettes](#) (*iVillage Health*)

You might be interested in:

- [High school students show a slower rate of decline in smoking in recent years](#) (*Chicago Tribune*)

WIN VIP TICKETS TO



presented by
CHASE
The official bank of the Bears.

Win VIP Tickets to Comcast Family Night

Enter to win a chance to attend the 'BBQ with the Bears VIP Party', hear live music, see fireworks and more on Friday, August

6th.



Make travel plans

Daily deals from more than 1,000 leading travel companies, confirmed for accuracy & availability.



70% Off Al Primo Canto

Get a \$50 gift card for \$15!

- [After 30 years, Big League Chew's bubble hasn't burst](#) (*Chicago Tribune*)
- [Mich. smoking ban boosts hypnotherapy, acupuncture](#) (*Chicago Tribune*)
- [Big League Chew still popular, controversial at 30](#) (*Chicago Breaking News*)

E-mail
 Print
 Reprint
 Digg
 Twitter
 Facebook
 Home delivery
 Share

Comments (0)

[Add comments](#) | [Discussion FAQ](#)

Currently there are no comments. Be the first to [comment!](#)

Also on chicagotribune.com



[Photos in the news](#)



[Mugs in the news](#)



[Celebrity sightings](#)



[Your travel photos](#)



[Need advice? Ask Amy](#)

Home

[Skillings' weather](#)
[Traffic](#)
[Obits](#)
[Blogs](#)
[Columns](#)
[Newsletter/alerts](#)
[Video](#)
[Photos](#)
[TV listings](#)
[Movie listings](#)
[Event tickets](#)

Classified

[Apartments](#)
[Cars](#)
[Celebrations](#)
[Commercial](#)
[Dating](#)
[Shop/Deals](#)
[Fan Shop](#)
[For Sale By Owner](#)
[Garage sales](#)
[Homes](#)
[Jobs](#)
[Mortgages](#)
[Obituaries](#)
[Pets](#)
[Public records](#)

About/Find

[Contact Us](#)
[Comments/questions](#)
[Tips](#)
[Manage subscription](#)
[Advertise](#)
[Twitter](#)
[Trib Nation](#)
[News in Education](#)
[Our community](#)
[Our news focus](#)
[Photo store](#)
[Tribune store](#)

Perks

[ChicagoPOINTS](#)
[Newsletter/alerts](#)
[Tribune events](#)
[Printers Row Lit Fest](#)
[Contests & Sweeps](#)
[Puzzles](#)
[Coupons](#)
[Mobile/iPhone](#)
[RSS feeds](#)
[Read the Trib on Kindle](#)
[E-edition](#)
[Archives](#)

News

[Breaking](#)
[Chicagoland](#)
[Go to Triblocal](#)
[Nation/World](#)
[Business](#)
[Health](#)
[Elections](#)
[Watchdog](#)
[Data](#)
[Obits](#)
[Schools](#)
[Topics](#)

Sports

[Breaking](#)
[Bears](#)
[Hawks](#)
[Bulls](#)
[Cubs](#)
[White Sox](#)
[College](#)
[Soccer](#)
[Tennis](#)
[Golf](#)
[Autos](#)
[Preps](#)
[Smack](#)
[Scores](#)

Chicago Tribune

[Triblocal](#) | [WGN Radio](#) | [WGN-TV](#) | [Vivelo Hoy](#) | [Baltimore Sun](#) | [Daily Press](#) | [Hartford Courant](#) | [Los Angeles Times](#)
[Orlando Sentinel](#) | [Sun Sentinel](#) | [The Morning Call](#)

[Terms of service](#) | [Privacy](#) | [Feedback](#) | Chicago Tribune, 435 N. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60611

A Tribune Newspaper website