

Oct. 27, 2014



Flavored Tobacco Forum warns parents about Big Tobacco's tricks for finding 'replacement smokers'

Flavored tobacco products include smokeless tobacco and cigars, and can come in flavors like grape and cherry

SARASOTA COUNTY — Students Working Against Tobacco and the Tobacco Free Partnership of Sarasota County want to raise awareness this Halloween, against some scary tricks Big Tobacco has been using for a long time. Flavors such as cherry, grape, and even chocolate are not something that most adults associate with tobacco products, however these 'sweet' flavors are often added to tobacco products such as chew, dip, snus, cigars and cigarillos to mask the harsh taste of tobacco. Public health officials warn that this tactic can make it easier for youth to start using tobacco products, creating a new generation of lifelong nicotine addicts or 'replacement smokers.'

The Flavored Tobacco Forum will be held on Wednesday, October 29 from 5:30-6:30 p.m. at the Florida Blue Center, 285 N. Cattlemen Road.

"When I first pointed these products out to my parents in the gas station, they didn't even know these things existed," says Evianna Gianoplus of the Pine View High School SWAT Club. "These tobacco products are obviously trying to get kids to smoke, because they come in cool wrappers, are flavored like candy, and are really cheap to buy."

For parents and adults, especially those who are not tobacco users, many of the flavored products can go un-noticed. All municipalities in Sarasota County have passed resolutions encouraging retailers to voluntarily restrict the sales of flavored tobacco products; however, these products are still available in almost all convenience stores, certain pharmacies, and even grocery stores throughout the county. They are often within arm's reach or at eye level for kids. They are not regulated in the same way cigarettes are, so often times they are not placed behind a counter, like traditional cigarettes. Moreover, they can be sold individually, are often available for less than a dollar, and are packaged in bright, colorful wrappers.

"The purpose of this forum is to inform our community of the tactics still being used by the tobacco companies" says Shirley Brown, School Board member and chair of the Tobacco Free Partnership of Sarasota County. "Many people don't know that the tobacco companies are still targeting our youth. To them we're saying: Don't trick our kids, these products are not treats!"



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For more information about Sarasota County's Tobacco Prevention Program, or to learn ways to get involved please visit <http://www.sarasotahealth.org/tobacco> or call 941-861-2805.

Tobacco Free Florida is a statewide cessation and prevention campaign funded by Florida's tobacco settlement fund. Tobacco Free Florida is managed by the Florida Department of Health, specifically the Bureau of Tobacco Free Florida.

Smokers and smokeless tobacco users interested in quitting are encouraged to call the Florida Quitline at 1-877-U-CAN-NOW to speak with a Quit Coach. To learn about Tobacco Free Florida and the state's free quit smoking resources, visit www.tobaccofreeflorida.com or follow the campaign on Facebook at www.facebook.com/TobaccoFreeFlorida or Twitter at www.twitter.com/tobaccofreefla.

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MEDIA NOTES:

DOH-Sarasota Media Contact:

Dianne Shipley, 941-861-2852; cell 941-302-1058; Dianne.Shipley@flhealth.gov

Website: www.sarasotahealth.org