The Southern Tier Tobacco Awareness Coalition (STTAC) seeks to build healthier communities through tobacco-free living in Chemung, Schuyler, & Steuben, NY.
This Earth Day, STTAC partnered with the Plastic Ocean Project, Community Arts of Elmira, and the City of Elmira to host community cigarette butt clean ups and an art exhibition.

The exhibition "Curbs to Canvas" featured community art made out of cigarette butts to send a powerful message: tobacco has a major impact on our community and our environment, and it needs to be addressed. Tobacco use is not only a health issue – it is also an environmental issue. Cigarette butts contain plastic, and are the most littered item in the world, making up one third (38%) of all litter collected in the United States. Tobacco waste is a health hazard for children and animals, putting them at risk for ingesting toxic chemicals. This toxic litter also leaches harmful chemicals into the environment. City of Elmira Mayor Dan Mandell explained, “Such litter is a community
issue. *Earth Day - Elmira was* an opportunity for everyone to work together toward the same goal: a cleaner, healthier city."

The "Curbs to Canvas" art exhibition developed into a regional partnership, and featured artwork by local community agencies, such as the [Steuben Rural Health Network](https://www.steubenruralhealth.org), [Schuyler County Coalition on Underage Drinking and Drugs](https://www.schuylercountycallco.org), and the [Chemung County Health Department](https://www.chemunghealth.org).

"Curbs to Canvas" was displayed alongside local, Bonnie Holden Monteleone's, national traveling art display, "What Goes Around Comes Around." This exhibit is an initiative of the Plastic Ocean Project to bring awareness regarding the problems with overuse of one-time use plastics, why it matters, and what can be done about it. Collecting plastics from nearly 10,000 nautical miles in three oceans, the art consists of plastic items morphed into the famous print, "The Great Wave of Kanagawa" by Katsushika Hokusai circa 1830. It systematically illustrates how the oceans are very different than what Hokusai saw less than 200 years ago. The work beautifully depicts the ocean and the menace of plastics, how all of us are part of the problem, and how we are the only solution. This art installation has now traveled over 4,700 miles and continues to exhibit around the United States, as an educational resource illustrating the science behind the art itself, comprised of educational panels, ocean trash and sculpture, representing the “plastic plague”.

Many thanks goes to the [Community Arts of Elmira](https://www.communityartselmira.org), [Plastic Ocean Project](https://www.plasticoceanproject.org), [City of Elmira - Mayor Dan Mandell](https://www.cityofelmira.com), [Second District Councilperson Brent Stermer](https://www.elmiranet.org), [Friends of the Chemung River Watershed, Inc.](https://www.chemungriver.org), [Tanglewood Nature Center & Museum](https://www.tanglewoodcenter.org), and the 50+ individuals that participated in clean ups, artists, and attendees for being part of this project.
WHAT GOES AROUND, COMES AROUND
Bonnie Monteleone

Sources:
2 http://www.plasticoceanproject.org/outreach-through-art.html
120 teen leaders from New York State took on Altria Group executives and shareholders on May 16th for the fourth consecutive year. Their actions, centered outside the Richmond Convention Center, Richmond, Virginia, and areas nearby, focused on why the tobacco giant baited consumers and public health officials, with the promise of withdrawing pod-based nicotine products from the market in order to combat teen vaping use, then switched their priorities by investing $12.8 billion in e-cigarette company Juul Labs. The teens represent Reality Check of New York.

This year, four local youth from the Southern Tier attended, and brought home what they learned. Emma Pack (Ernie Davis Academy), Katy McCormick (Ernie Davis Academy), Krissi Elliott (Corning Painted Post HS), and Amber Updike (Greater Southern Tier BOCES STEM Academy) are all community leaders, in their own right.

“Despite what they say, Altria spends billions marketing their deadly products right in front of us, first cigarettes and now Juul” said Emma Pack, a student of Ernie Davis Academy and Reality Check champion. “Their goal is to create a new generation of customers—just in a different product. Enough is enough, already!” Studies show that kids who shop in stores with tobacco marketing,
such as gas stations and convenience stores, are 64 percent more likely to start smoking than their friends who don’t.

The teens were dressed in waders and carried fishing poles with a fresh catch of Juul nicotine pods and Marlboro cigarettes hanging from them. They want Altria executives, as well as the entire tobacco industry, to know that they won’t be “Fuuled” by Big Tobacco investment in Juul and will continue to carry out the awareness-raising work they start in Richmond in their communities back home.

Some youth took their stories right to the biggest fish – the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Altria Group, Howard Willard. Eight Reality Check teens and two youth leaders had been given shareholder proxy tickets and went inside the meeting to address corporate tobacco executives and ask questions. Amber Updike of Watkins Glen was one of the youth who had this special opportunity.

Altria’s investment will allow Juul products to be displayed alongside regular cigarettes in the nation’s retail outlets, a combination that undercuts earlier promises Altria made with former Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Commissioner Scott Gottlieb to clamp down on the youth vaping “epidemic.”

Public health officials and youth leaders for Reality Check, who have successfully fought to eliminate youth-attracting marketing tactics like colorful packaging and candy flavors in cigarettes through the years, see this as their next big battle to reduce teen tobacco use.

“Alltria blamed nicotine pods and fruity flavors for fueling a surge in teen vaping,” said Samantha White, coordinator of the Reality Check program of Chemung, Schuyler, and Steuben counties. “If that’s the case, then why did they invest in Juul, the company that made these types of e-cigarettes so popular?”

Reeling in more information:
Findings on youth tobacco use and tobacco industry marketing in places where children and young adolescents can see it indicate:

- The average age of a new smoker in New York is 13 years old, and 90 percent of adult smokers say they first tried smoking by age 18.
- The U.S. tobacco industry spent an estimated $9.5 billion on advertising and promotion of cigarettes and smokeless tobacco in 2013. This includes nearly $220 million annually in New York State, or nearly $602,000 a day.
- Stores popular among adolescents contain almost three times more tobacco marketing materials compared to other stores in the same community.

This Altria shareholders demonstration was a joint effort between Reality Check NY, No Limits of Nebraska and Counter Tools of Chapel Hill, NC, a non-profit organization that provides training to public health workers who are working on point of sale tobacco control. In preparation for demonstrating on Thursday, the Reality Check youth spent all day Wednesday learning about tobacco control policies, how the tobacco industry contracts with retailers and how they can stand up, speak out and make a difference in the fight against big tobacco.

Reality Check is a teen-led, adult-run program that seeks to prevent and decrease tobacco use among young people throughout New York State.

For more information about Reality Check, visit realitycheckofny.org.
Source:

1 http://www.tobaccofreenys.org/

Local Reality Check Update
Now that Spring has sprung, Reality Check youth leaders have been hard at work trying to make a tobacco-free generation blossom! Teens from Chemung, Schuyler, and Steuben counties started by raising awareness about the issue of tobacco-litter in our communities. Southern Tier youth created artwork out of cigarette butts collected at our Earth Day cleanups. The teens' toxic masterpieces were on display alongside artwork from *The Plastic Ocean Project* for our *Curbs to Canvas* exhibition.

Following the art exhibition, four youth leaders from the Southern Tier ventured down to Richmond, Virginia to take a stand against Big Tobacco, literally. Alongside 120 youth from all over New York State, Reality Check teens spoke out at the Altria Shareholders' meeting proclaiming that they will not be "Fuuled." Youth held posters and props while chanting about the tobacco industry and the deceptive marketing tactics that we still see today. Youth dressed as fishermen to play the part of Big Tobacco; holding fishing poles baited with flavors that are commonly used in tobacco products. One local youth was able to go into the shareholders' meeting and ask the CEO of Altria a question. The message of the demonstration is clear: Reality Check wants the
tobacco industry to put people over profit. We will not fall for the "bait and switch" tactics of Big Tobacco. As stated in one of the chants, "Rolling, rolling, rolling. The numbers are really showing. People are dying, loved ones are crying. Altria stop your lying."

As we are winding down towards the end of this school year, youth in Chemung, Schuyler, and Steuben are already gearing up for next year! We have discussed what we would like to see in our community and we're making plans to take action. Stay tuned to see what Southern Tier Reality Check teen leaders will take on next!

If you know of any youth in Chemung, Schuyler, or Steuben counties who would be interested in participating in this free youth-leadership program, contact Samantha White at (607)737-2858 or spwhite@chemungcountyny.gov.

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**WHAT'S HAPPENING THIS MONTH:**

**Thursday, June 27th** - From 10am-12pm is the STTAC Coalition meeting at the Corning Community College Health Education Center (132 Denison Parkway East, Corning, NY 14830)

**STTAC IN THE NEWS:**

*Star Gazette & The Leader - April 2019*
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Get tobacco ads out of sight of kids

Have you noticed that kids pick up on everything? Kids are very inquisitive and take it all in, including advertising for tobacco and e-cigarettes.

The next time you go to the convenience store, gas station or pharmacy, stop and take a look at the tobacco advertising. How much of the in-store advertising is at eye level of our kids? Is the advertising brightly colored? There are rows and rows of cigarettes, smokeless tobacco and e-cigarettes. Maybe you have never noticed them, but our kids certainly have!

Tobacco companies deliberately advertise this way to put their products in front of our kids. Young people are almost twice as likely as adults to recall tobacco advertising, and it makes them more likely to smoke. In-store advertising near schools and in low-income neighborhoods is particularly effective. The bottom line is, tobacco marketing is literally in the face of those most vulnerable to it.

Think about how much money the tobacco companies are spending to put their products in front of our kids. Billions of dollars! Take a few minutes and look up the facts. I found information at SeenEnoughTobacco.org. Don’t look the other way. Take action and get tobacco out of sight.

ALEXIS BARTSCH
ELMIRA
WENY 05/16/19 - Southern Tier Students Rally at Tobacco Shareholder Meeting
Here in New York State, tobacco companies spend more than a half a million dollars every day to place promotions in stores where kids can see them. And the more they see, the more likely they are to start smoking.

TAKE ACTION: CLICK HERE TO SIGN THE PETITION

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