



"The Clean Air and Healthy Lungs
People" since 1917

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Breathe California Sacramento
Region protects, promotes, and
enhances the health and well-being
of the public and environment
through initiatives that promote
clean air, lung health, and tobacco-
free living.

NEWS RELEASE

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Sacramento Student Volunteers Earn National Recognition for their Research on the Depiction of Smoking in Movies

*Local Student Research Drives the Recent Analysis and Recommendation by 17
Major Public Health Groups to Apply an R-rating to Movies with Tobacco Imagery*

This week, a coalition of 17 of the nation's most influential health and medical groups sent a letter to film industry leaders demanding that they give an R-rating to all films that have depictions of smoking or tobacco. These groups include: the American Academy of Pediatrics; the American Academy of Family Physicians; the American Medical Association; the American Cancer Society; and the American Heart Association.

Locally, the non-profit organization Breathe California Sacramento Region has been instrumental in this effort because of their ongoing research on the amount, portrayal, and context of tobacco use in new movies. For over 20 years, Breathe California has organized this research and trained Sacramento area student volunteers how to collect data on tobacco in movies, under a program called "Thumbs Up! Thumbs Down!". The students' years of research is used by many public health and medical organizations, including: the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; the University of California at San Francisco; and the US Surgeon General.

"I didn't realize just how much imagery of tobacco use and smoking there is in movies that are rated for children and teens, until I started counting it", said student volunteer Kristi Nguyen, "and there's a lot!"

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have projected that exposure to on-screen smoking in movies will recruit more than 6 million U.S. children to start smoking, of whom 2 million will die prematurely from tobacco-induced cancer, heart disease, lung disease, or stroke.

"When young people see attractive actors and role models smoking in movies, they want to try it too. The movies make smoking look attractive, and cool. It makes perfect sense that many young people start smoking after seeing these films", said another student volunteer reviewer, Kapreese Gonzalez.

The data from Breathe California shows that the number of youth-rated movies that depict tobacco use has not decreased since 2010. Further, the number of tobacco images in today's youth-rated films have increased significantly, which is of particular concern to public health and medical groups.

"If the industry had simply continued reducing tobacco content in its youth-rated films at the pace it did between 2005 and 2010, all youth-rated films would have been entirely smoke-free by 2015", said Dave Modisette, CEO of Breathe California Sacramento Region. "Instead, today the average PG-13 film with any smoking is actually 30 percent smokier than a decade ago."

The CDC estimates that by voluntarily implementing policies that require an R-rating for movies with smoking, the film industry can prevent 1 million tobacco deaths among today's children.

In addition to doing the ongoing research on tobacco imagery in new movies, the student volunteers in the Breathe California program also present and discuss their findings with their peers in meetings around the Sacramento area. These awareness-raising activities may serve an "inoculation" for young people against on-screen smoking and starting to smoke.

"Progress must still be made by the film industry if we are to have smoke-free youth-rated movies in the future. But if these Sacramento students have anything to say about it, they will continue to fight to rate smoking "R", and save 1 million lives, until tobacco is out of youth-rated movies for good", Modisette said.

Breathe California Sacramento Region is a 100 year old non-profit organization that fights for clean air, healthy lungs and tobacco free communities through advocacy, policy, education and research. To learn more about this or other programs, please visit SacBreathe.org.

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