

Panhandle

Public Health District

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For immediate release

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PPHD highlights area athletes who steer clear of tobacco and vaping

Panhandle Public Health District (PPHD) once again partnered with area students to spread the word on the dangers of tobacco use of any kind. The campaign features local high school athletes who commit to saying no to the harmful effects of tobacco and vaping and how it can affect their athletic performance.

A campaign on PPHD's Facebook page featured two athletes, one from Alliance and one from Bridgeport, who are leading the charge in their schools and communities on vowing to not use tobacco or vape products. The athletes highlighted include:

- **Josie Sanders** of Alliance, "I choose not to vape or use tobacco to reach my highest potential as an athlete, and to set an example for younger athletes. Setting my future self up for success means making the right choices now."
- **Kelsie McVicker** of Bridgeport, "I am tobacco and drug free because the best days of life are ahead of you."

Each athlete had a post on the PPHD Facebook page and the athlete receiving the most "likes" on the original post on Facebook would get a \$250 scholarship courtesy of PPHD. The winning athlete for the fall season was Kelsie McVicker of Bridgeport.

According to the Panhandle Nebraska Risk and Protective Factor Student Survey Results for 2023, 57% of area 12th graders self-report never using a vaping or e-cigarette device. It is more important than ever to teach your students, kids, and community members the significance of prevention and the harms of addiction. There are no safe e-cigarettes, especially since e-cigarettes contain nicotine, which is addictive and toxic.

Nicotine increases your heart rate, tenses your muscles, and decreases the oxygen to your brain, despite a reputation for 'relieving stress.' In young people, 5 mg of nicotine a day is enough to establish a nicotine addiction.

Young people also face increased instances of anxiety and depression and while it has always been thought that nicotine is a stress reducer, this is a common myth. In a study published by the Journal of American Medical Association, current e-cigarette users have double the odds of

having a diagnosis of depression compared to those who have never vaped. Nicotine use in general can increase stress levels.

Students are the target of the tobacco industry and their harmful marketing tactics are creating new generations of tobacco users. By standing up to these tactics, area student athletes have the potential to be great leaders in their communities to help stop other students from becoming lifelong tobacco users.

For help quitting, the Nebraska Tobacco Quitline is available at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669), and for Spanish services at 1-855-DÉJELO-YA (1-855-335-3569). We encourage parents and teens to talk to their healthcare provider about resources and support. For additional resources visit www.QuitNow.ne.gov or www.pphd.ne.gov.

Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety, and quality of life for all who live, learn, work and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle Community.

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