Storm Toolkit

American Lung Association. | PACT Pennsylvania Alliance to Control Tobacco | tru tobacco resistance unit

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Advocate.
Educate.
Make your voice heard!

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TRU is funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Health.

Help create awareness about the dangers of tobacco products — like e-cigarettes and smokeless tobacco — and expose the lies of Big Tobacco by planning tobacco-free activities and events!

What is a TRU Storm?

TRU Storms celebrate a tobacco-free lifestyle with the purpose of educating others about the importance of being tobacco-free. TRU Storms are events hosted by TRU groups across the state of Pennsylvania. While these events can take place any time of the year, they are typically held around **tobacco-free holidays.** These Storms can take place at schools or other organizations where TRU groups are located, including YMCAs, YWCAs, Big Brothers Big Sisters, LGBTQ+ organizations, and more. Anyone can plan a Storm: TRU Advisors, members and even alumni!

What are Tobacco-Free Holidays?

Tobacco-free holidays are annual events celebrated nationwide, and in some cases worldwide, to support and encourage others to quit tobacco and spread awareness about the dangers of tobacco products. These holidays are great opportunities for TRU members to educate others about tobacco products like cigarettes, e-cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, and more. TRU members can get as creative as they want when planning events to celebrate these holidays and help promote tobacco-free lifestyles.

The most popular tobacco-free holidays include:

- **The Great American Smoke Out** – 3rd Thursday of November
- **The Great American Spit Out** – Thursday of the 3rd full week of February
- **Threw with Chew Week** – 3rd full week of February
- **Take Down Tobacco National Day of Action** (formerly Kick Butts Day) – April 1
- **World No Tobacco Day** – May 31
- **World Lung Cancer Day** – August 1

The options don't end there. TRU Storms can also take place during other holidays, such as Earth Day in April and Red Ribbon Week in October. Plus, tobacco-free events don't have to fall on a specific holiday to be considered a TRU Storm. For instance, an event focused on our MSA funding or Point of Sale initiatives is also considered a TRU Storm. The opportunities are endless!

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TRU Swag

Don't forget to check out the TRU gear that is available to all students who participate in TRU Storms! View the items available and request gear at TRUinPA.org/request-TRU-gear.

What Tobacco-Free Activity Should You Plan?

Tobacco-free activities can take many forms and can be modified to enhance involvement among youth, young adults, or the overall community. No matter the activity, the goal should be to promote healthy, tobacco-free lifestyles by educating about the dangers and health effects of tobacco products and providing quit resources.

See below for activity ideas to help recruit TRU members and promote tobacco-free lifestyles. **Can't meet with your group in person?** Check out the virtual alternatives suggested for many of the activities below.

Cigarette Butt / Vape Pod Clean-Up:

Photo courtesy of Tobacco Free NWPA

Notice a lot of cigarette butts or empty vape pods in your community? Chemicals found in both combustible tobacco products, like cigarettes, and non-combustible tobacco products, like e-cigarettes, can be dangerous to the environment. According to Truth Initiative, over ***four trillion*** cigarettes are littered each year, accounting for almost 40% of all collected litter. E-cigarette waste poses a potentially more serious threat since littered e-cigarettes introduce plastic, nicotine salts, heavy metals, lead, mercury, and flammable lithium-ion batteries into waterways, soil, and wildlife.[1]

Help prevent some of that environmental damage by picking up the littered products from your school, organization, or community.[2] Educate others about this issue by revealing the number of cigarette butts/vape pods found. Post signs, write a letter to the editor (LTE) or create a public service announcement (PSA) about the environmental dangers this litter causes and the amount of litter your group picked up.

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[1] Truth Initiative. *A toxic, plastic problem: E-cigarette waste and the environment* (Mar 2021). Available at https://truthinitiative.org/research-resources/harmful-effects-tobacco/toxic-plastic-problem-e-cigarette-waste-and-environment

[2] Always use protective gear, like gloves, when handling these products

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Jeopardy TRU Storm:

Photo courtesy of Conemaugh Valley TRU Group

Organize a Jeopardy-style competition to let youth test their tobacco knowledge. Help TRU members come up with categories and questions to include. Topics might range from the history and health effects of tobacco products, to Big Tobacco marketing tactics, or even TRU advocacy initiatives. Keep in mind the Jeopardy host will provide the answer and the contestants must respond with the correct question. Promote the event to friends, classmates, and the community. Consider offering a prize, like a gift card or TRU swag, to the winner and having TRU recruitment materials for all participants.

***Virtual Option**: Find an online Jeopardy Game template that will let you create a virtual game using your own questions and answers. Then schedule a Zoom party and share the meeting link with all participants.

Spread Your Message Through Sports:

Photo courtesy of the Portage TRU Group

Sports are a great way to bring people together! Consider planning a sporting event with a tobacco-free theme. TRU groups have organized "Kick Butts Kickball" and "Spike Down Vaping Volleyball" games to get youth from school and the community talking about tobacco-free lifestyles. You can even include a tobacco product disposal station at the event so youth can anonymously drop off their tobacco products and start their quit journey. Include a resource table with information on youth cessation programs, like NOT on Tobacco and NOT for Me, and other tobacco-free resources to drive home the message.

Talk with Chalk:

Make your students' voices heard by creating tobacco-related sidewalk messages. As a group, decide what facts and information you want to share in your messages. Consider raising awareness about the dangers of tobacco products, including e-cigarettes or Big Tobacco's deceptive marketing toward youth. Next create eye-catching, creative messages with chalk on high-traffic sidewalks at school or around the community. (Be sure to get the permission of the school or organization in advance!)

***Virtual Option:** Have everyone create chalk messages on their own driveways and sidewalks and post them on social media using a specific hashtag and tagging @TRUinPA.

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Photo courtesy of Drug Free Aliquippa

Tobacco-Free Movie Nights:

According to the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), the Surgeon General's report found that smoking in movies causes young people to start smoking. Giving an "R" rating to future movies with smoking occurrences could help reduce the number of smokers by nearly 1 in 5. Host a tobacco-free movie night to show that smoking and vaping don't have to be included in movies and follow-up the movie with a discussion on the danger of tobacco use in movies, the role (if any) tobacco plays in movies, how that effect could be achieved without tobacco, and how you can help to decrease tobacco use in movies. For more information, check out smokefreemedia.ucsf.edu.

***Virtual Option**: Use an online platform to stream the movie together as a group, then host a group discussion over Zoom.

Tobacco-Free Pledge:

TRU members understand the importance of pledging to live tobacco-free. Use your knowledge and experience to encourage others to take the tobacco-free pledge too! Set up a table to collect pledge sign-ups at any type of large gathering, such as a school function, sporting event, concert, orientation, club meeting, activity fair, and much more! Have handouts and other resources available to help spread the word about the dangers of tobacco and the

Photo courtesy of Titusville YWCA

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benefits of going tobacco-free. Display the number of pledges collected using a post-it wall or other visual representation.

***Virtual Option:** Signatures can be collected virtually using an online message board that can be shared on social media. Be sure to tag us @TRUinPA!

Tobacco-Free Poster Contest:

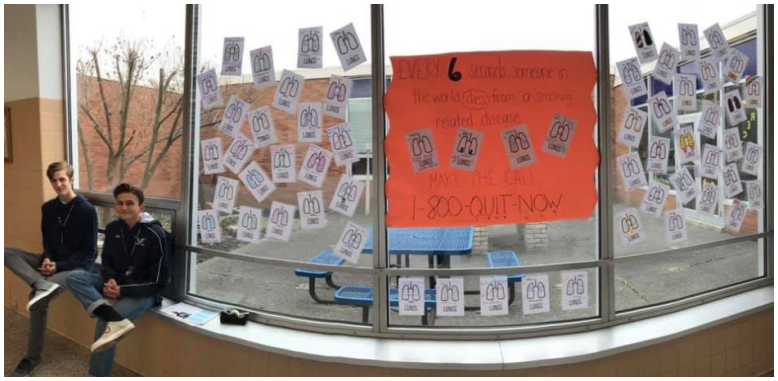

Photo courtesy of schools from Freeland, Clarks Summit, and Laporte, PA

Work with TRU Members to design "no smoking," "no vaping," or "tobacco-free" signs to post around your school, organization, or at a community event, such as a sporting event. These signs/posters can be created for windows, doors, classrooms, bulletin boards, the cafeteria, etc. Make it interesting by turning this sign-creation into a poster challenge. Have everyone vote on which entry is the most creative or most impactful and reward the student with the winning design.

***Virtual Option:** Design a poster using materials found at home or create a digital sign. Then share the creation on social media tagging TRU @TRUinPA.

Blow Bubbles, Not Smoke:

To creatively spread awareness about the dangers of "blowing smoke" or "blowing e-cigarette aerosol" – blow bubbles instead! Get a large group together to all blow bubbles or bubble gum at the same time. Take pictures and post on social media using the hashtag #BlowBubblesNotSmoke to start a social media storm. Watch this video as an example, courtesy of Mahanoy Area School District.

***Virtual Option:** Blow bubbles at home with family or on your own and upload the video to social media, tagging TRU @TRUinPA.

Legislator Letter Writing Party:

Organize a letter writing party to educate state legislators about tobacco control issues that matter to youth, such as MSA funding for tobacco prevention and cessation programs (like TRU!) or even the problems you've seen in your own experience with e-cigarettes. This is a great way for TRU youth to raise their voices to make a difference! Find your legislators here.

Photo courtesy of Western Wayne

***Virtual Option:** Download TRU postcards to send to lawmakers thanking them for their support of tobacco prevention funding for programs like TRU. Or contact your legislator using this MSA email template. Make it more interactive by writing your letters together via Zoom.

Meet with Local Legislators:

Make a difference in your community and schedule a legislative visit with your state senator or representative. Help your TRU group prepare for the meeting by teaching them about advocacy and the role state legislators play in tobacco prevention and control. Check out the TRU Advocacy 101 webinar and Advocacy Toolkit for more information!

Photo Courtesy of the Stay TRU Group

During the meeting, have your TRU members educate the legislator on the dangers of tobacco products and express the importance of tobacco control issues, such as securing lifesaving funding for tobacco prevention and cessation programs (MSA Funding). Find your legislator here and report your visit to TRU here!

***Virtual Option:** Instead of an in-person visit, arrange a phone call between your TRU group and your state representative or senator. Phone calls count as legislative visits, so don't forget to report your visit to TRU here!

Advisor Bonus: Register to be an official adult advocate with the Pennsylvania Alliance to Control Tobacco (PACT) here, if you haven't already.

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An Appetite for Advocacy:

Partner with local restaurants to have anti-tobacco flyers included with all deliveries over a given period of time. Have TRU members decide what information to include in the flyer and how to design it. The flyer could feature facts about the dangers of tobacco (either a specific type or all products), quit resources, and how to get involved with TRU.

Photo courtesy of Nicotine Free

Social Media Savvy:

With your members, create a video highlighting the dangers of using tobacco products and why it's so important to NOT use them (for instance, protecting others from secondhand aerosol or smoke). Or develop a video sharing the importance of Tobacco 21. Get creative! Share the video on social media, tagging @TRUinPA, and use a specific hashtag to create a social media storm.

Photovoice Advocacy:

Have you seen anything on or around your organization, or even on the outskirts of your community that seems alarming? For instance, have you seen a lot of tobacco ads targeted towards youth and young adults? Have you noticed a lot of littered tobacco products in parks or on sidewalks or around campus? Have your group to take photos of what you notice. Then get together to form a discussion group to talk about what the problem is in the photo and what the solution could be. Learn more about Photovoice Advocacy.

***Virtual Option**: Have TRU members collect photos on their own, then host the group discussion over an online platform such as Zoom.

Taking Down Tobacco:

Help educate youth on the dangers & health effects of tobacco products and expose the lies of the tobacco industry through the Taking Down Tobacco training program, offered by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. The program offers a free, one-hour online training that can help teens become tobacco- free leaders in their schools and communities. Make this activity more interactive by completing the training as a group.

Photo courtesy of schools in Freeland, Clarks Summit, and Laporte, PA

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***Virtual Option:** No modification needed. It's already virtual!

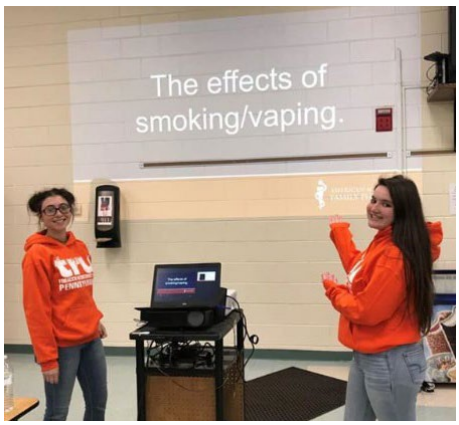

Photo courtesy of Western Wayne

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Recruitment Ideas

Looking for new TRU members? Try these recruitment activities:

- Set up a table in the school cafeteria to talk to students about TRU and encourage them to pledge to be tobacco-free by adding their name to your tobacco-free wall of post-it notes. Plus, offer TRU swag to incentivize students to sign-up!
- Hang posters around the school showing why members joined TRU or why it's great to be tobacco-free. Then let them know how to join your group!
- Expose Big Tobacco lies and sneaky marketing tactics in a series of posts or posters that encourage youth to join TRU to help stop Big Tobacco in its tracks.
- Create a brief PSA highlighting the important issues TRU addresses, the success we've had, and the activities in store for this year. Post the video to social media or ask the school to play it during morning announcements.
- Distribute a mailer or e-blast to local schools & youth organizations.
- Keep in mind, there are a ton of places outside of school to recruit new TRU members. Partnering with local after school clubs & programs, Girl and Boy Scouts, YMCA and YWCA, and summer camps is a great way to reach more potential TRU members.
- Create a social media account dedicated to your TRU group. Use it to share information on the dangers of tobacco products, youth cessation resources and TRU news and initiatives. Let your followers know why and how to join your group.

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Resources

- PACTOnline.org
- TRUinPA.org
- Lung.org
- Taking DownTobacco.org
- CDC.gov
- Photovoice.org
- TruthInitiative.org

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