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Photo by Erin Sanchez

Family Night Out at Dakota High focuses on youth vaping

Nearly 30% of county high school students vape

By: [Alex Szwarc](#) | [Macomb Township Chronicle](#) | Published November 12, 2019



A variety of vaping paraphernalia and e-liquids were on display for students to view.
Photo by Erin Sanchez

MACOMB TOWNSHIP — Dakota High School’s first Family Night Out of the school year was all about vaping awareness.

Around 75 students and parents attended the Nov. 6 event to learn about the latest trends, news and updates regarding this growing youth epidemic. The night was sponsored by Dakota’s Coalition Teen Council and the Chippewa Valley Coalition for Youth and Families.

Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services, or ACCESS, Public Health Coordinator Corey Beckwith spoke for about 45 minutes on vaping and how today’s teenagers are using it.

He emphasized that despite his best educational intentions, no one can influence a young person’s decision whether or not to use drugs, alcohol and tobacco more than parents.

“We can’t forget that most of our kids aren’t doing this and that it’s something that can be prevented,” he said.

Beckwith shared data from the Michigan Profile for Healthy Youth, or MiPHY, indicating that 29% of Macomb County high school students reported that they were currently vaping.

On a positive note, he said that only 3.3% of teenagers reported smoking cigarettes in Macomb County.

“The idea that vaping is just a marijuana problem isn’t the case,” Beckwith said. “We don’t know what’s causing all these illnesses yet. We do know nicotine vaping is connected to these in many cases.”

Dakota High School Student Assistance Specialist Stephanie Lange has worked in the district for 20 years and said that with vaping, it’s the first time that a drug has crossed over the barrier that it doesn’t matter what kind of grades a student is getting.

“There aren’t any determining factors we can point to, to say a certain child is more at risk for vaping,” she said. “We have kids with all A’s, on the honor roll and at-risk youth, but it’s shocking that vaping isn’t finding a demographic like we’ve been able to figure out with other trending substances.”

Lange said Family Night Out started in 2001 as an opportunity to bring people together.

“As a school, we knew there were a lot of topics we hoped parents would be talking about at home, but we thought parents wouldn’t know where to start, so we started it as a way to get people talking,” she said.

What troubles Lange is that it took over 100 years for people to figure out the negative medical impact from smoking cigarettes.

“It’s only been 13, maybe 14 years with e-cigarettes,” she said. “We’re just beginning to find out how we’re going to die.”

Dakota junior Matt Barnett, a member of the school’s Coalition Teen Council, said he wants to share statistics with students who vape.

“People have been dying and getting sick from this,” he said. “Being on the council has given us the data to support what we’re saying. You can’t argue with numbers.”

Senior Lauren Davis said discussion on vaping is increasing at Dakota.

“If you see someone smoking (cigarettes) on the street right now, you think that’s disgusting,” she said. “We know the facts. Vaping is similar; we just don’t have 300 years of research yet.”

In October, a state judge granted a preliminary injunction to vape shop owners who opposed Gov. Gretchen Whitmer’s flavored vaping ban, halting the state from enforcing emergency rules banning the sale of the products.

In early September, Whitmer announced a ban on flavored vaping products in Michigan, following reports of a marked increase in youth usage and an uptick in presumed vaping-related illnesses.

Following the presentation, students were split into small groups for discussion, answering questions like what influences some people to use drugs and some to refrain, and what their view is on vaping companies targeting teens as new customers.

The next Family Night Out event is Dec. 11, discussing teen drug trends, also at Dakota High School, 21051 21 Mile Road.