

COSH's Programme unlocks youngsters' creativity and leadership skills for smoke-free advocacy

Youngsters take the lead in spreading the smoke-free healthy living message in Hong Kong. Inspired by the enhanced "Smoke-free Elite Teens Programme" 2021-2022, 200 local secondary school students developed and organised a variety of fun-filled educational online and in-person activities as well as promotional tools, aiming to help more people understand the hazards of all types of smoking and stay away from it. They have successfully engaged tens of thousands of fellow pupils and members of the public across all ages. An earlier version, the "Smoke-free Teens Programme", had been held by the Hong Kong Council on Smoking and Health (COSH) since 2012.

Co-organised by COSH and the Education Bureau, the upgraded "Smoke-free Elite Teens Programme" 2021-2022 expanded its scope to include the elements of life-planning and offered diversified and immersive learning experiences, both in-person and online, including visit to university, training camp and mentor sharing. The inspired participating teens acquired a comprehensive range of skills, such as problem-solving, teamwork, communication, project planning and execution, as well as in-depth knowledge about the smoking hazards.

As practice was the key to effective learning, the Programme motivated the participants to apply what they have learned to develop and organise a variety of smoke-free advocacy activities on their campuses and in the community. The ultimate goal is that the participants will become the next generation of leaders in the society. The participants formed groups and organised 130 online and in-person smoke-free promotional activities. Their smoke-free messages successfully reached over 40,000 individuals. The activities ran the gamut from videos, design competitions, promotion at schools and online classes, social media promotion, to street promotion and interviews.

A Showcase cum Sharing Session was held on June 24, 2022. This was also the occasion for the Smoke-free Elite Teens to receive recognition for their contributions. Mr Henry TONG, COSH Chairman, said it was encouraging that Hong Kong's smoking prevalence dropped to 9.5 percent, for the first time on record hitting single digit. "However, the impact of alternative smoking products (ASPs) on youth cannot be neglected. We are glad to see our Smoke-free Elite Teens initiated ASPs-themed programmes to debunk the myths and arouse the attention of students, teachers and the public to this topic."



Activities at the training camp helped build team spirit.

Champion: St. Catharine's School for Girls



The members: Chan Yu; Chung Wing Yan; Lau Sze Yin; Ng Wing Hei; Yang Lexi and Yeung Ming Yan, well understood that nurturing positive thinking should begin at a young age. Hence, they developed a "WhatsApp Sticker Design Competition" targeting the primary school

students in the Kwun Tong district. The students were encouraged to turn their outstanding drawings with smoke-free messages into WhatsApp stickers. "Social media is popular among youngsters. Our contest aimed to motivate primary students to get the right idea about the dangers of smoking, e-cigarettes and ASPs," said Ng.

"We organised the "Hand Held Paddle Signs Design Competition" for S1 to S3 students and our school was featured in the winning entries." To engage the general public in its smoke-free promotion, the team distributed hundreds of the paddle signs in the neighbourhood, said Yang.

On campus, a "Make A Pledge Day" event was organised said Chan. "We shared the misinformation about ASPs targeting youngsters spread by the marketers."

The members agreed that they enhanced their adaptability and teamwork through the Programme. Lau said, "Because of the pandemic-related social distancing measures, we always had a plan B. For instance, the "Make A Pledge Day", originally designed as an

in-person event, was conducted via live-streaming. We divided up the tasks based on our individual specialised skills. We collaborated well because we complemented one another."



First runner-up: Queen's College Old Boys' Association Secondary School



A Youtube video of a science experiment graphically simulating the damage of nicotine to the lung was the highlight among this team's projects. All the team

members studied biology. They were: Cheung Ka Yu; Lam Yan Yi; Liu Yongen; Wen Yuk Kwan; and Zhou Ching Lam. The team decided on a setup with glass tubes and cotton wool. After burning four cigarettes, the video showed how the nicotine and tar contaminated the cotton wool via water and air flow pressure. This simulation demonstrated striking visual impact.

The team harnessed the power of social media by setting up an Instagram account. "Our posts focus on debunking the misinformation of cigarettes and ASPs by marketers," said Wen.

According to Cheung, the most challenging project was the "Every Family Supports Smoke-free Lifestyle" held during the parents' and school information day. "We approached the parents and invited them to fill in our electronic questionnaire and watch

our video. This project helped boost our confidence as we needed to overcome our initial nervousness."



Second runner-up: New Territories Heung Yee Kuk Yuen Long District Secondary School (Team 1)



This team, consisting of Fong Lok Yi, Beatrix Agatha Wong, Gladys Wong Ying Chun and Yip Wai Ching, relished the interaction with members of the public interviewed for their Youtube video. "We focused on the

public's understanding of smoking hazards," said Yip. "After the interviews, we provided some supplementary information to fill the gaps in their understanding. The responses were positive. From the design of content to editing the video, we considered who were our target audience and selected the quotes accordingly. We aimed to convey the smoke-free messages succinctly."

The team selected individuals across different ages to get diverse perspectives and varied attitudes towards traditional cigarettes and ASPs.

Sensing that some teens were misinformed about ASPs, the team launched an Instagram account targeting them. Gladys Wong said,



"The posts feature eye-catching images with smoke-free messages in succinct language that resonate with the teens."

Outstanding Smoke-free Teams
 Hong Kong Army Cadets Association
 Lok Sin Tong Leung Chik Wai Memorial School
 New Territories Heung Yee Kuk Yuen Long District Secondary School (Team 2)
 S.K.H. Leung Kwai Yee Secondary School
 Shung Tak Catholic English College (Team 2)

The "Smoke-free Elite Teens Programme" 2022-2023 is now open for application.

For more details, please visit www.smokefree.hk



Smoke-free Teens



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