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Campus

Tech program helps students to quit smoking

by Lindsay Wharton
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Smoking is popular among college students across the nation. Because of the deadly habit's prominence, the Center for Tobacco and Prevention Control at Texas Tech has taken measures encouraging students to quit smoking.

"The center is primarily interested in helping to reduce tobacco use among college students," said Dr. Donna Bacchi, director for the center.

By sending information through Web sites frequented by Tech students, the center helps get the message to college students, Bacchi said. Recently, the center has been using www.thefacebook.com, and www.techfresh.org because many college students use these Web sites.

Thefacebook.com is Web site that enables college students to chat and keep in touch with friends at universities across the nation by updating profiles and messaging. The Tech Fresh Web site is an entertainment site that informs students about social events on and off campus.

Bacchi said the center has a technology called April Age software that shows students what they may look as they get older. It also demonstrates what smoking and excessive sun exposure will do to a person's skin overtime. Bacchi said smoking will cause excessive wrinkles over time.

The center will bring software to any function to help increase knowledge about smoking, Bacchi said. The center also works with the Lubbock community to make sure Lubbock's smoke-free ordinance is upheld.

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The ordinance states that all enclosed building will not allow smoking indoors except sports grills, zoned bars and smoke shops.

Bacchi said second-hand smoking effects people who work in bars, smoking restaurants, smoking offices, and live with smokers.

Second-hand smoking is more harmful than smoking a cigarette because the chemicals are breathed in directly as opposed to through a filter, she said. Even if a person cannot smell the smoke, they are taking in the chemicals.

The center also tries to deter students from smoking by reviewing the negative health problems associated with smoking and the difficulties involved with quitting.

Students who smoke may never fully regain the lung capacity and health benefits of non-smokers, but they can greatly reduce their risk of getting cancer and other negative health effects by quitting, Bacchi said. The sooner people quit smoking, the sooner they will become healthier.

Cigarettes almost immediately harm a person's body by raising blood pressure, Bacchi said. There are about 50 chemicals in a cigarette that can cause cancer. Every time a person smokes one cigarette they are increasing their risk.

"Your body begins to be harmed after those first couple of puffs," she said.

People generally have a negative reaction the first time they smoke. Some students may believe they are immune to addiction when they smoke, but usually, people have to smoke two or three times before they develop a nicotine addiction.

People should not start smoking because chances of quitting are slim, Bacchi said. Two to 3 percent of the entire population's smokers are able to quit each year.

Students start smoking for various reasons but they have similar harmful results.

Adam Ruther, a junior public relations major from Sugarland, said he started smoking when he was depressed because of an accident where he temporarily lost the use of his right hand.

Ruther said after he got better, he continued to smoke because he received a pleasurable feeling from smoking.

"Whenever I smoke I feel sexy," he said.

Bacchi said nicotine affects the part of the brain that helps elevate people's moods and relieves stress. However, students can receive the same mood boost through exercise because physical activity stimulates the same part of the brain and less damaging than smoking.

There are 4,000 harmful chemicals in cigarettes, including arsenic, carbon monoxide and ammonia. Bacchi said cigarettes are one of the few drugs where only using about two a day will harm a person's health.

"I would suggest that anyone currently smoking even when they go out socially should seriously consider quitting," she said.

Patrick Sherlock, a sophomore pre-nursing major from San Antonio, said he does not smoke because his grandfather died from lung cancer.

"It's a drug that gets you nowhere," he said.

For more information about quitting smoking, contact Stuart Allan at (806) 743-4481.



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