

# Anti-smoking drive targets youth, vanity

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Roswell Park Cancer Institute is asking young people to face the future by showing them a computer simulation of what they'll look like after a lifetime of smoking.

Patricia Hysert, director of the state-wide Task Force for Tobacco-Free Women and Girls based at Roswell Park, is visiting area schools with a camera and computer simulation program that in a matter of seconds predicts how today's pre-teens will age if they decide to smoke or stay nicotine free.

Hysert said the results usually are met with shrieks of laughter and exclamations of "I'm never going to look like that."

"The ability to show personalized illustrations of how smoking can affect facial appearance has a lasting impact on students," Hysert said.

The point of the project is to help the next generation avoid the long-term health risks of smoking by appealing to their vanity, Hysert said. Boys and girls alike benefit from the exercise, she said.

"They are not likely to react to a health message at the age when they start smoking," she said.

The software she uses is a product of Toronto's Aprilage Development Inc., a recent spinoff of a special-effects and animation company that services the film industry.

The idea to discourage smoking by focusing on its outward effects came from young people in grade six through 12 statewide who participated in a survey conducted for Hysert's task force. Many mentioned computer "morphing" specifically, she said.

Hysert contacted the Ontario Science Center for information about its interactive exhibit on aging, and was put in contact with C.O.R.E. Digital Pictures Inc., the Toronto company that was behind the exhibit's technology. C.O.R.E.'s software was based on statistical research of more than 7,000 people of all ages, ethnicities and lifestyle habits, as well as on published



Images on the computer screen represent what Steve Stich, a 12-year-old sixth grader, would look like at age 72 if he were to take up smoking.

data regarding facial changes associated with aging.

She asked if the company could insert smoking into the aging formula.

The company jumped on the idea, incorporating into the software Roswell Park statistics that show smoking a pack of

day speeds the aging process 1.4 times. The software since has sold to about a dozen schools, universities and health departments across the United States, and has picked up interest in Canada, South America and Europe. The company has since developed the aging process around sun

exposure and is working on the effects of obesity on aging.

In January, Aprilage – short for Age Progression Image Launcher – was created as a separate entity to continue to develop the software, said Irene Sudorgin, director of business affairs.