

Schools visited: 19 (Swift Current, Gull Lake, Mortlach, Moose Jaw, Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert and Shellbrook)
Students reached: 750 in grades 6 to 9
Student evaluations completed: 500

I began the presentation by introducing myself and explaining to the students that I was not there to tell them that smoking was bad or why they should not do it. Rather I was there to show them the harmful effects of smoking on a person's appearance. Before I started the software demonstration I talked to the students about the tobacco industry, relying heavily on Georgina Lovell's book "*You Are The Target: Big Tobacco: Lies, Scams- Now The Truth.*" Through internal tobacco industry documents, Lovell's book illustrates how the tobacco industry says one thing publicly but something completely different privately. After reading the statements I would ask the students what they understood the statements to mean. My goal was to share the information from Georgina's book and have the students make their own conclusions rather than me making statements about the industry. Sharing this information with the students got their attention and helped them to see the tobacco industry in a new and different light.

The software presentation was one hour long which allowed me to enhance about six photos. I began printing a side by side with the original photo and an aged smoking photo of the student at sixty-five. However I found it more effective to show students how they'd look at 65 if they smoked versus if they didn't. While the computer was processing the data, I would quiz students on their tobacco knowledge and provide small prizes for the winning answer. (rulers, stickers, tattoos). This seemed to make good use of the time.

I have spent three years working in the tobacco field and I have to say that the *April* software is the most effective tool I have ever used. It gets the students thinking on a level they have never considered. It appeals to their vanity and gives them a very

personal glimpse into their future. Using Georgina Lovell's book in conjunction with the software challenges their current beliefs about smoking and the industry. I believe the *April* software is a highly effective way to engage young people on the dangers of tobacco use.

I asked teachers to also evaluate the presentation and most were positive. The presentation was rated out of five and most either gave it four or five marks. There was only one teacher who rated the presentation a three. The teachers did give some good suggestions and the following are a sample of their comments:

- the presentation needs to be an hour or under otherwise you lose the students attention
- include an information sheet of tobacco facts to hand out at the end of the presentation
- most liked that the presentation was not too "preachy" but still addressed real life concerns like beauty (really effective with the females)
- include a power point or overheads of the tobacco industry's quotes from Georgina's book to help students focus
- include video clips or advertisements on the effects of smoking
- include pictures of the effects of smoking internally with more researched facts (power point)

Some of the negative comments were that the software was too slow which loses the students' attention. One teacher also commented on how the students may only relate the aged look to smoking and not consider other factors like genetics. The other negative comment was that the hair color did not age and this made the aging less realistic.

My suggestions are as follows:

- show tobacco advertisements versus anti-tobacco advertisements
- use power point for the following: tobacco industry quotes, statistics on smoking in Canada, smoking rates among young people across Canada, smoking rates around the world, how many provinces and countries are smoke free, tobacco facts, pictures of what smoking does to the inside of your body (many students have a great curiosity about this)
- the laminating drivers license idea was too cumbersome for the time allotted and I found it more effective to give the students an aged photo of themselves

As for the student evaluations, most say they liked the software presentation. They had fun seeing them seeing themselves or their classmates aging and it kept their attention. The most frequent comment on how the presentation could be better was if the hair could age along with the facial features. They also suggested we provide more information on cigarettes such as what they contain and how they are made. When asked what else they would like to learn about tobacco and smoking, most students wanted to learn more about the industry and how they market to children. Many other students wanted to learn about how harmful smoking was to the inside of their bodies and they wanted to see pictures of what smoking does to the inside of the body. The final question on the student evaluation was if after the presentation would the student want to try smoking or not? Most students said they would not want to try smoking but a few said that they would despite the new information. A handful of students who already smoke said the presentation made

them either want to quit or seriously consider quitting. One smoking student said the presentation gave her a lot to think about.

Here are some student comments emailed to me from a grade5/6 class at MJ Coldwell School in Regina:

"I learned a lot by this presentation. Cheryl was a great help because she made me change my mind about smoking when I was older." (Grade 6 girl photographed)

Probably a "When I saw my friend's faces if they smoked for 50 years--I can't imagine what they look like in the inside, black and rotten. Gross." (Grade 5 boy)

"Smoking sucks! I don't know why people think it is cool. " (Grade 6 boy)

"After what I saw today, I know I'm not going to smoke ever. I saw how people looked when they smoke and what's going to happen to them." (Grade 6 girl)

"Today we had a lesson on smoking and nonsmoking and I would prefer non-smoking and I have a very good reason because they get wrinkles. The funny part was when the person took pictures and aged them, I looked ugly." (Grade 5 boy)

This software is a great way to talk to youth about the dangers of smoking in a non-threatening way. It opens the door for further discussion about tobacco and is one of the best tools I have ever used. I believe it should be for the long term for grades 6-12. For the younger students it may just be the resolve they need to never smoke and for the older students it may be what they need to quit smoking as they consider the future.