

Academia

Great American Smokeout comes to Bertie Co.

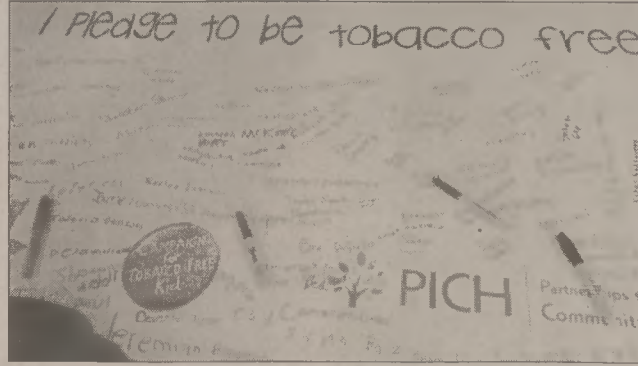
Collaborative between Bertie County Schools, Three Rivers Healthy Carolinians

Last year marked the 39th Annual Great American Smokeout (GASO).

Recognized annually on the third Thursday of every November, smokers across the nation are encouraged to quit smoking for the day with the hopes of quitting for longer.

On Nov. 18, 1976, the American Cancer Society campaign was responsible for nearly one million smokers quitting for the day, marking the first Great American Smokeout event.

Bertie County Schools encouraged students to sign a banner that stated, "I Pledge to be Tobacco Free." Hundreds of students throughout the county signed the banner and heard an important educational message about the benefits of living tobacco



Left: The Great American Smokeout at Bertie High School. Above: The pledge from Aulander Elementary School.

free and the effects smoking had on their health.

"Even though the students may not yet use tobacco, their participation in tobacco education activities is very important," stated Wanda Stallings, Health Educator with Albemarle Regional Health Services.

Tobacco use is responsible for nearly one in five deaths in the United States, while

smoking is the most preventable cause of death in our society. Research says almost all smokers start while they're young.

The good news is that the number of younger Americans who smoke cigarettes has been going down since the late 1990s. Results from the 2013 National Survey on Drug Use and Health states that each day, nearly 3,000 kids under the age of 18 try

their first cigarette and another 700 become regular, daily smokers. About one-third of these smokers will die prematurely from a smoking-related disease.

According to the American Cancer Society, the health and behavior problems linked to tobacco use are associated with absenteeism, suspension, and expulsion - all of which are linked with

lower academic performance.

Studies have shown that smokers are more likely to miss school than non-smokers, and absenteeism is linked with lower student grades. Keeping students healthy, in school, and ready to learn is the responsibility of parents, educators, and the medical community. Most importantly, it is the responsibility of the stu-

dents themselves. "Bertie County Schools and Three Rivers Healthy Carolinians have helped to play a vital role by offering tobacco education as part of the GASO", stated Erin Brabble, Coordinator for Three Rivers Healthy Carolinians. "We are appreciative of funding from the Partnerships to Improve Community Health (PICH) grant to support this educational activity."

As of 2013, nearly 23% of all high school students (grades 9-12) had used some kind of tobacco product in the past month. Today, there are more forms of tobacco to choose from, and many teens are choosing flavored cigars, smokeless tobacco, hookahs, pipes, and electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes).

AgCarolina Farm Credit offering 27 scholarships

RALEIGH - AgCarolina Farm Credit announces 27 college scholarships are available and will be awarded in the coming months.

The Raleigh-based farm lender has long been a supporter of young and beginning farmers and others who live in rural North Carolina.

College scholarships are just one component of the Young and Beginning

Farmer Program at AgCarolina Farm Credit. Ag loans, special loan programs, educational seminars, and financial sponsorships to help young and beginning farmers succeed are also provided by the agricultural lender.

Five FFA scholarships are available to FFA members who are high school seniors, along with two scholarships to students at-

tending North Carolina A&T State University. Recipients must be residents of eastern North Carolina. The scholarship program is part of the cooperative's corporate giving program, the Fund for Rural North Carolina. Applications are due by April 30.

Students who are enrolled in an agricultural related degree at North Carolina State Univer-

sity may apply for one of five \$2,000 scholarships. Recipients must be children or grandchildren of customers of AgCarolina Farm Credit. Students must apply directly to NCSU. Applications are due by Feb. 17.

In addition, five \$750 scholarships will be awarded to students enrolled in the Ag Institute at North Carolina State University. Recip-

ients must be children or grandchildren of an AgCarolina customer. Students must apply directly to NCSU. Applications are due by Feb. 17.

Ten \$1,000 "At-Large" college scholarships will be awarded to recipients who are attending or plan to attend a four-year college or university within the State of North Carolina. The "At-Large" scholar-

ships are non-degree specific and recipients must be the children or grandchildren of customers of AgCarolina Farm Credit. The application deadline is April 30.

"AgCarolina believes in investing in the young people of eastern North Carolina as they pursue higher education," says Dave Corum, AgCarolina's President and CEO.

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