

# **PENNINGTON & RED LAKE COUNTIES WELLNESS COALITION NEWSLETTER February 2015**



## **Random Acts Of Kindness Week – Feb. 9-15**

Let's all take a minute to do this!

Seek out an opportunity to help every day. Hold open a door, offer assistance, help someone trying to get a stroller down the steps or take any small acts of kindness. Every small interaction with someone is an opportunity to have a positive impact on both of your lives.

### **Tobacco In Disguise**

Erin Simmons of the American Lung Association in MN has a good idea of who is buying the Gummy Bear-flavored e-juice and the Hello Kitty-themed e-cigarettes that turn the flavored, nicotine-laced juice into an aerosol to inhale.

You might find it in a student's back pack -flavored snus the size of Trident gum sticks. Look for a flip-phone shaped container that appears like it's meant to hold candy. Or, check for flavored cigars that smell like Jolly Ranchers candies. You may find toothpick-sized tobacco sticks, or gum drop-sized pads or orbs that dissolve in the mouth. Tobacco that dissolves in your mouth comes in containers that look like they would hold candy Tic Tacs. Of course, you might find cigarettes in the backpack. They now come in lots of different packages too, including some small enough to fit in a young girl's tiny purse. These are just a few of the tobacco products available at convenience stores everywhere, warned Erin Simmons. "The tobacco industry swears that they are not marketing to young people but they are certainly creating products that have an appeal to young people," Simmons said.

She spoke recently at a professional development day attended by 450 teachers. Simmons' goal was to make teachers attending her session aware of the many different ways their students could be consuming tobacco products right under their noses. In some cases, it's happening between their toes. Simmons told the instructors about one girls' basketball team that had been placing tiny packets of snus between their toes before games. The

moist, thin skin readily absorbs nicotine into the bloodstream.

But it is the sudden rise in the use of e-cigarettes by children that worries Simmons and others the most. Today the cost of admission to a nicotine addiction with e-cigarettes starts at under \$10. And the devices are easy to hide. One e-cigarette looks like a computer jump drive, and can be re-charged with a USB port, just like a cell phone. There are now more than 7,000 flavors of e-juice to use in the devices. Most of the e-juices are laced with nicotine and all should be considered toxic for children. There are cases of accidental poisonings when toddlers swallowed the candy-flavored liquids, Simmons said.

She had good news: Messages about the unhealthy consequences of smoking seem to be getting out. A 2014 survey of Minnesota high school students found that the use of traditional cigarettes had dropped, from 18.1 percent in 2011 to 10.6 percent last year.

But some bad news: The survey also found that e-cigarette use is fast on the rise, with 12.9 percent of high school students responding to the 2014 survey saying they had tried e-cigarettes in the last 30 days. "Even more concerning, the young people using this product are not the same people using regular cigarettes," Simmons said. "They are not using both products, they are using one or the other so we're not making progress in terms of overall decrease in use."

Simmons worries that rural youth may have easier access to tobacco products than their metropolitan counterparts, despite laws prohibiting the sale of any tobacco product to those under age 18. In rural communities, it is not unusual for the lone clerk in a convenience store to be a high school student. "it's really hard for one 16-year-old to tell another 16-year-old that they are not going to sell to them," she said.

Just as worrisome is the perception among many young people that e-cigarettes are not as harmful as traditional cigarettes. The long-term health consequences of inhaling the aerosols generated by e-cigarettes are not known. There is no reason to believe that it is safe, "Everything we know about

our lungs inhaling chemicals tells us it's not," she said. Inhaling e-cigarette aerosols exposes lungs to nicotine, propylene glycol, glycerin, flavorings and unknown substances. "There are absolutely no laws that pertain to the manufacturing of this product," she said of e-juice.

Source: [actiontoquit.org/news](http://actiontoquit.org/news)

### Tweets from our Teens

Twitter address: @RedPennWellness

## Parenting Tips – Bullying

### Warning Signs

There are many warning signs that may indicate that someone is affected by bullying—either being bullied or bullying others. Recognizing the warning signs is an important first step in taking action against bullying. Not all children who are bullied or are bullying others ask for help.

It is important to talk with children who show signs of being bullied or bullying others. These warning signs can also point to other issues or problems, such as depression or substance abuse. Talking to the child can help identify the root of the problem.

### Signs a Child is Being Bullied

Look for changes in the child. However, be aware that not all children who are bullied exhibit warning signs.

Some signs that may point to a bullying problem are:

- Unexplainable injuries
- Lost or destroyed clothing, books, electronics, or jewelry
- Frequent headaches or stomach aches, feeling sick or faking illness
- Changes in eating habits, like suddenly skipping meals or binge eating. Kids may come home from school hungry because they did not eat lunch.
- Difficulty sleeping or frequent nightmares
- Declining grades, loss of interest in schoolwork, or not wanting to go to school
- Sudden loss of friends or avoidance of social situations
- Feelings of helplessness or decreased self esteem
- Self-destructive behaviors such as running away from home, harming themselves, or talking about suicide

## Parenting Tips – Bullying continued

If you know someone in serious distress or danger, don't ignore the problem. Get help right away.

### Signs a Child is Bullying Others

- Kids may be bullying others if they:
- Get into physical or verbal fights
- Have friends who bully others
- Are increasingly aggressive
- Get sent to the principal's office or to detention frequently
- Have unexplained extra money or new belongings
- Blame others for their problems
- Don't accept responsibility for their actions
- Are competitive and worry about their reputation or popularity

### Why don't kids ask for help?

Statistics from the 2012 Indicators of School Crime and Safety show that an adult was notified in less than half (40%) of bullying incidents. Kids don't tell adults for many reasons:

Bullying can make a child feel helpless. Kids may want to handle it on their own to feel in control again. They may fear being seen as weak or a tattletale.

Kids may fear backlash from the kid who bullied them.

Bullying can be a humiliating experience. Kids may not want adults to know what is being said about them, whether true or false. They may also fear that adults will judge them or punish them for being weak.

Kids who are bullied may already feel socially isolated. They may feel like no one cares or could understand.

Kids may fear being rejected by their peers.

Friends can help protect kids from bullying, and kids can fear losing this support.

Source: [www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov)



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Serving Pennington & Red Lake Counties  
218-681-0876 TRF or 218-253-4378 RLF  
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