**Members of the S.O. set up an anti-smoking walk that showed how smoking advertisements are geared towards children.**

**BY: SHAWN REILLY**

“It’s kind of last minute,” said Joe Sicilian, Coordinator of Student Activities. “But we can handle it,” he assured the student government, who had been presented with a new challenge: to put together an awareness walk in three days. “We were chosen for this because we’re becoming known as a school for activism,” continued Sicilian, “People trust us to take action, it really is a big deal.”

The walk, entitled “Take A Walk in Our Shoes” was sponsored by the American Lung Association, the Staten Island Smoke-Free Initiative and Reality Check, a program sponsored by the Jewish Community Center. The walk had one purpose, to increase awareness of the amount of tobacco advertising that is geared toward children. Approached by James Petilli, borough organizer of the Staten Island Smoke-Free Partnership and Staten Island Quits Chairman, Curtis High School decided to spearhead the walk to help show others how much tobacco advertisement is on display close to schools. Curtis and Tottenville students gave a tour to other students, as well as elected officials, of the St. George areas tobacco advertisement hot spots.

Once you actually actively look for it, it becomes quite noticeable,” says Sarah Keddy, Junior Class Vice President. “Walking down to Borough Hall, there were about twenty advertisements for tobacco, all in proximity to schools.” During the walk, the students passed seventeen advertisements, and five stores with tobacco products. The proximity of the advertisement to the school helps tobacco companies promote their products to younger people. “The younger ones comment more on the survey, exclaiming, “Wait, it’s not legal for minors! I thought it was!” A small debate ensued under the poll with comments going back and forth about whether cigarettes or hookahs are more harmful to smoke. A surprisingly large number of students argued against cigarettes, believing them to be more harmful despite the comments stating the potency of hookah tobacco.

According to the Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, “The tobacco is no less toxic in a hookah pipe, and the water in the hookah does not filter out the toxic ingredients in the tobacco smoke.” Hookah smokers may actually inhale more tobacco smoke than cigarette smokers do because of the large volume of smoke they inhale in one which can last as long as 60 minutes.”

As alarming as this information is, many students continue to smoke hookah because it is the basis of many “social gatherings” and is “fun, almost like gathering for a drink,” said one former Curtis student, Soukaina Sourour ‘11.

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**Grim statistics on Hookah smoking does not dissuade teenage users.**

**BY: SHAWN REILLY**

Hookah, the Middle Eastern water pipe made for smoking flavored tobacco, has become increasingly popular among teenagers and young adults in the United States and Europe. Though illegal for minors under federal law, because it involves tobacco smoking, many teens are not asked for identification in hookah lounges and these lounges are not monitored by state officials. One popular lounge on Staten Island that allows minors to smoke Hookah is the 101 Cafe. This has become a popular hangout among Curtis High School students.

What many don’t realize, however, are the harmful risks of hookah. “The tobacco is filtered through a water pipe,” said one Curtis senior, “so any carcinogens are basically removed.” This misconception is shared by many.

A poll conducted on Facebook found that 83.3% (105 out of a total 126 students surveyed) of high school students in the tri-state area think cigarette smoking is more harmful than hookah. One student even commented on the survey, exclaiming, “Wait, it’s not legal for minors! I thought it was!” A small debate ensued under the poll with comments going back and forth about whether cigarettes or hookahs are more harmful to smoke. A surprisingly large number of students argued against cigarettes, believing them to be more harmful despite the comments stating the potency of hookah tobacco.

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