



The Wellness Coalition

TOBACCO-FREE MONTGOMERY

**CESSATION PROGRAM AND COMMUNICATIONS
EFFORTS TO REDUCE TOBACCO USAGE**

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PROJECT BACKGROUND

Tobacco use in Alabama has rapidly risen throughout the state, specifically within rural, low-income communities. The Wellness Coalition has partnered with the Alabama Department of Public Health to coordinate tobacco cessation efforts for community members across Montgomery county and surrounding areas.

During the programmatic year, we have engaged with community members by conducting initiatives to educate community members and mitigate the effects of tobacco within our target demographics. By mailing surveys, gathering success stories, creating tobacco-free policies and establishing the Tobacco Task Force, we have been working to help create healthier, tobacco-free spaces in different locations within Montgomery for the community members that we serve.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- American Heart Association
- American Lung Association
- The Beacon Center
- House of Greek, LLC
- Metropolitan United Methodist Church
- Montgomery Realty
- Patricia's Boutique
- Tuskegee Senior Center
- Shirley Daniels, Director of The My Baby and Me Initiative

COMPLETED WORK PLAN INITIATIVES



Developed and maintained a list of community leaders (influencers respected in the community such as police, fire chief, elected officials, Chamber of Commerce members, pastors, principals, doctors, business owners, bankers, neighborhood leaders).



Created a list of smoking and non-smoking establishments in Montgomery, AL, developed a customer base, and created potential partnerships through the target market.



Obtained current smoke-free/tobacco-free policies for all hospitals, colleges, and universities in the city of Montgomery, AL.



Participated in The Coalition for a Tobacco-free Alabama meetings; created the Smoke-Free Montgomery Task Force, a coalition that includes a host of multi-disciplinary and diverse community partners, including faith-based organizations, healthcare, community leaders, and business leaders throughout the metro Montgomery area; organized quarterly coalition meetings.



Conducted the LungLovers survey, a data collection survey that details the opinions of community members about tobacco use and developed an evidence-based best practice/publication based on collected information.



Wrote a letter of support that includes the role of this proposed project in collaboration with the Alabama Department of Public Health.

MEMORANDUMS OF UNDERSTANDING

During this programmatic year, we have developed numerous MOUs with businesses and organizations who decided to adopt tobacco-free practices, including:

- Patricia's Boutique (Montgomery)
- House of Greek (Montgomery)
- Tuskegee Senior Center (Tuskegee)
- Montgomery Realty – West Haven Multi-Unit Housing Complex (Montgomery)

Within these businesses, we initiated tobacco free policies with Patricia's Boutique, House of Greek in Montgomery, and Montgomery Realty. Both Patricia's Boutique and House of Greek owners embraced the concept to curb tobacco use.

“
My reason for wanting to educate the community concerning the health hazards of using tobacco products is very personal. My uncle was diagnosed with lung cancer and passed away at age 44. My brother was diagnosed with lung cancer and passed about eight months after the treatments at age 59. My aunt was diagnosed with emphysema, and later lung cancer, and passed as well. I have been told by numerous individuals that they would stop smoking if they could afford the patches. I believe The Wellness Coalition's resources will help many families live a better quality of life and save many lives.
”

–Patricia Thomas, Owner, Patricia's Boutique



It's imperative to support clean-air and smoke-free environment ordinances in our communities —particularly for environments in which children live and learn even when they aren't present. Eliminating secondhand smoke in the indoor environment will reduce its harmful health effects and improve indoor air quality and the comfort or health of all.

Delia Hasberry
REACH Program Coordinator



ENGAGEMENT & OUTREACH

Number of African American Residents Who Called the 1-800-Quitline

For the 2021-2022 programmatic year, we have attended over 60 outreach/engagement events. Outreach activities include canvassing neighborhoods, attending webinars and seminars via Zoom, hosting events, conducting surveys, and speaking with local public officials. Detailed below are months in which outreach was conducted.

PERIOD 1: 4/28/20–4/29/21 (12 MONTHS)

- 88 total calls
- 51 females; 37 males
- Age range: 28–84 years

Count by Zip Code:

- 48 people from 36108
- 10 people from 36105
- 23 people from 36116
- 7 people from 36110

PERIOD 2: 4/28/21–4/29/22 (12 MONTHS)

- 134 total calls
- 61 females; 73 males
- Age range: 23–76 years

COUNT BY ZIP CODE:

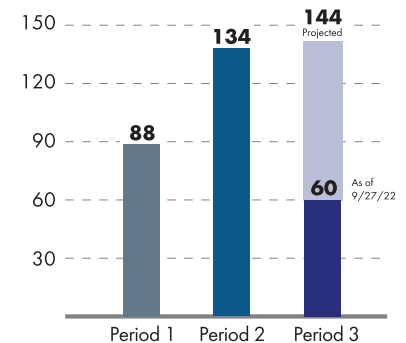
- 84 people from 36108
- 10 people from 36105
- 29 people from 36116
- 11 people from 36110

PERIOD 3: 4/29/22–9/27/22 (5 MONTHS)

- 60 total calls
- 53 females; 7 males
- Age range: 22–76 years

Count by Zip Code:

- 4 people from 36108
- 4 people from 36105
- 24 people from 36116
- 7 people from 36110



CHALLENGES & SUCCESSES

COMMUNITY TOBACCO/SMOKE-FREE CHALLENGES/BARRIERS

One challenge that serves as a barrier is the reluctance of apartment complexes and businesses to adopt smoke-free policies due to the belief of “infringing upon tenants and customers rights”. Even after explaining the legality of smoking, explaining the cost-effectiveness of developing a tobacco-free policy, and stating that the practice of smoking is not a right that is given nor protected through the Alabama or United States’ Constitution, business owners and property managers were reluctant to become tobacco free.

Another challenge during this programmatic year was the retention and recruitment of members for the Tobacco Task Force. While community members were interested and willing to learn more about the Tobacco Task Force, members became disengaged and did not return to the meetings that were held. Possible reason for the lack of engagement: Meetings were quarterly and community members lost interest.

COMMUNITY SUCCESSES

Increased referrals to the 1-800 Quitline, four Tobacco MOUs established, three tobacco policies implemented,



Tobacco use plagues communities across Alabama, especially in rural areas. For many rural residents, the financial impact is great, but tobacco use can have an even greater cost: a person’s life. We want residents to know that there is freedom: Freedom from smoking. Freedom from vaping. Freedom from dipping. Freedom from tobacco.

Samuel Duff
Tobacco Program Community Liaison

DATA COLLECTION & EVALUATION

BACKGROUND

Funded by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) initiative, The Wellness Coalition (TWC) is working in 42 census tracts in three Central Alabama Counties (Lowndes, Macon, and Montgomery) to reduce racial and ethnic health disparities by increasing access to healthy food, improving access to healthcare, health insurance, and prevention and management of chronic diseases. One of the programs implemented by TWC in Year 4 of their REACH grant is the tobacco cessation intervention. This report summarized the LungLovers surveys completed between December 2021 and September 2022. Survey participants were reached through social media advertisements on Facebook, a direct mail campaign, and a text message campaign.

DEMOGRAPHICS

More than seven out of ten respondents are female (70.9%). Close to one-half (45.6%) of the respondents are 55 years of age or older. More than three-fourths (77.8%) of respondents are African American.

LUNGLOVERS SURVEY ASSESSMENT (COUNTS AS SURVEY RESULTS & OPINION POLLS):

- Nearly one-half (47.2%) of respondents said they had either current or prior experience with smoking.
- Sixteen percent (15.9%) of respondents indicated they currently smoke, while close to one-fourth (23.2%) of respondents indicated they used to smoke, and 8.1% indicated they only smoked a handful of times or less.
- More than one-half (52.8%) of respondents have never smoked a single cigarette.
- Caucasians were more likely than African Americans to have smoked at some point in time.
- Of respondents who indicated they used to smoke (23.2%), about one-third (33.7%) indicated the last time they smoked was between 1 and 5 years ago.
- Close to one-half (48.0%) of the respondents last smoked more than ten years ago.
- Of the respondents who indicated they currently smoke (15.9%), close to eight out of ten (77.6%) indicated they smoke every day, while an additional 13.4% indicated they smoke "most days" and 9.0% smoke "a few times a month."
- Close to two-thirds (65.6%) of the current smokers indicate they have smoked for more than 10 years.
- While 13.4% of the current smokers indicated they don't plan on ever quitting, 86.6% of the smokers would like to quit at some point in time.
- More than six out of ten (62.7%) would like to quit "someday" while 7.5% would like to quit in the near future, and 16.4% would like to quit as soon as possible.
- When all respondents who indicated they have



EVALUATION SUMMARY

The LungLovers survey was completed by 542 participants living in Lowndes, Macon, and Montgomery Counties.

smoked before (47.2%) were asked how old they were when they smoked their first cigarette, four out of ten (43.2%) were under 18, while an additional 41.7% were between 18 and 24 years old.

Smokers and non-smokers indicated they believe that:

- Secondhand smoke is harmful (95.8%)
- They know the difference between cigarettes with and without menthol (54.7%)
- They smoke or smoked in front of others (35.9%)
- Their doctors ask them about smoking and provides resources on how to quit (23.8%)
- Hookah and e-cigarettes/vapes are safer alternatives (13.6%)
- It is everyone's right to smoke anywhere they want (10.5%)

WORDS OF ACTION & INSPIRATION

As a former health educator, I have been in discussions with students from elementary to the collegiate level. I've listened to students repeat what they thought I wanted to hear, or use rote memory of sayings that they have heard along the way. "Just Say No." "Smoking is like kissing an ashtray," "Smoking is bad for your lungs." Many young people are quick to copy things from their environment.

The message to anyone who is concerned about the increase in tobacco usage and its effects on young people is that we must do more to bring awareness to what a healthy lifestyle means, and how we can help young people embrace the message. Some may say that young people aren't the only ones who smoke. Those people are absolutely correct, but focusing on awareness and prevention helps everyone.

A couple of years ago I took a group of college students on a field trip to various locations around our city. Each student was asked to observe and record what they saw. Their observations were not surprising to me, but they were to them. Many stores displayed ads promoting tobacco products in their front windows. This led to a long and thought-provoking discussion about disparities and the business practice of taking advantage of one's social circumstances.

Each young person can be an advocate for themselves and their health. They can be part of the change that needs to come in order to win or even put a dent in the battle against tobacco usage. Yes, this is a battle. We must put on our armor and become foot soldiers in our communities. We must challenge those around us to help protect the health of our young people. I will continue my efforts to educate young people of the hazards associated with smoking. I will ask them to value their lives and take control of the things that can and will harm them over time, especially tobacco.

As advocates for smoking cessation move forward and collaborate with those who are like-minded, we will lead the change that will bring an end to the increase in tobacco usage among our young people.

WHAT MESSAGE IS BEING SENT TO OUR UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES?

Does the health of our young lack worth, or is it just business? Young people, especially those of color, are more easily influenced. If they see tobacco being glamorized, they will jump on the band wagon. Those of us on a mission to educate see the enticing pitfalls, and that is why policy change is so important.



Courtesy of:

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