



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2023.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: _____

Program Title: _____

Program Category: _____

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: _____

Title: _____

Department: _____

Telephone: _____ Website: _____

Email: _____

SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: _____

Title: _____

Signature: _____

Orange County Youth Tobacco Litter Clean Up and Prevention Initiative

Communities throughout the commonwealth are negatively impacted by tobacco litter daily. Tobacco litter poses a real environmental, economic, and social burden on residents and visitors alike.

In 2020, the Truth Initiative, cited that over 13% of adults in the Commonwealth smoked, and in 2019, 5.5% of highschoolers smoked at least one cigarette a day¹. Cigarette and vaping trash make up more than one-third or nearly 38 % of all collected litter, and 75% of smokers report disposing of tobacco litter out of a car or on the ground². Cigarette butts release arsenic and lead into the environment contaminating water sources according to the National Institute of Health threatening the health of humans and animals alike³. A typical cigarette filter may look like cotton, but 98 % of cigarette filters are made with plastic fibers (cellulose acetate) that are not biodegradable (won't break down from living organisms). A recent study referenced by the National Library of Medicine, found that a cigarette butt was only about 38% decomposed after two years⁴. Vaping products are also harmful to the environment. An estimated 6.25 trillion plastic cigarette butts are littered annually according to the National Institute of Health. Components of e-cigarettes are also toxic, including nicotine, battery acid, and heavy metals such as mercury and lead. ⁵

¹ <https://truthinitiative.org/research-resources/smoking-region/tobacco-use-virginia-2021#:~:text=Cigarette%20smoking%20rates%20in%20Virginia,%2C%20the%20rate%20was%2015.5%25.>

² <https://truthinitiative.org/research-resources/harmful-effects-tobacco/why-are-cigarette-butts-most-littered-item-earth>

³ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3088407/>

⁴ <https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov%2Fpmc%2Farticles%2FPMC4307979%2F&data=05%7C01%7Cbest%40orangecountyva.gov%7C46cd1c5c2b16462f7d2c08db4b313196%7C6d2705e62a0e443dbb67a8acd0b6cd4f%7C1%7C0%7C638186446882649824%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljojMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=9aluVOKjQmzyN7sS6I5JA8OcBjAiA%2FgT3WY3Ck1O9Wc%3D&reserved=0>

⁵ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6187764/>

Fortunately for Orange County, tackling tobacco use and litter is one of the projects the Youth Council is most passionate about. In partnership with the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth, and its Tobacco Grant, the Office on Youth has led the way in tobacco clean up in central-Virginia. The department and their dedicated troupe of youth advocates deployed a three-pronged approach to tobacco use prevention and clean up. The approach includes the Take Down Tobacco Contest and Programming, Tobacco Litter Clean Up Events, and a Vaping Cessation Hotline.

The Take Down Tobacco Contest has been held for two (2) consecutive years in partnership with the national Take Down Tobacco Day⁶. The contest is open to all local middle and high school aged youth. Orange County students are invited to create an advertisement against flavored tobacco products, either through an original photo or artwork or through a digital graphic or video. All submissions must be produced individually. Students don't need to have any high-tech video equipment or graphic design applications to enter, creativity and originality are the only prerequisites. A panel of adult judges selected from the Orange County community volunteer to evaluate the advertisements submitted on the following criteria: message and appropriateness to the theme, creativity and originality, overall presentation.

All work is categorized into two divisions: middle school and high school. Each submission is assigned a number for the evaluation by judges, so that judges will not know the name, grade, or school location of the contestant. One winner is selected from the middle school division and one winner from the high school division. The winner of each division, along with other finalists, has their advertisement prominently displayed on the website and social media pages of the Orange County Office on Youth and the Orange Healthy Community Action Team as well as by the Office on Youth at their physical office and other media outlets as

⁶ www.takedowntobacco.org

deemed appropriate. Further, the students are invited to be recognized at a meeting of the Orange County Board of Supervisors and the Orange County School Board. To help them pursue their creative ambitions and education, winners receive an iPad Pro and a \$250 scholarship to apply towards photography or video-editing software.

In addition to the art contents, the Youth Council advertise and promote pledging to be tobacco free on National Take Down Tobacco Day and release public service announcements on the radio to bring awareness of the tobacco problems in our community.

The Office on Youth (OOY) averages two (2) litter clean up events annually: one in the Town of Gordonsville and the other in the Town of Orange. As this event enters its third year, Orange County's Youth Council continues to engage the community on the harmful effects of tobacco and cigarettes in the cleanup events. Last year, the youth picked up over 11,200 cigarette butts in the towns of Orange and Gordonsville. The Youth Council aims to have one in each Town within Orange County each fiscal year. They measure the weight of the tobacco litter that is collected and determine how many cigarette butts that equates to based on the average weight of a single cigarette butt. Volunteers have collected butts, vape product waste, cigarette wrappers, dip containers, etc. These events garner a lot of attention in the community as the youth are visible in bright yellow vests and armed with litter sticks and buckets.

Besides, tackling the tangible issue of tobacco litter, the Youth Council acknowledges prevention is key to stopping litter. Through their Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth grant, the group works with teens throughout the community to stop smoking and vaping with the "This is Quitting" program from the Truth Initiative. The program provides twelve (12) free weeks of support to help teens to stop smoking and vaping. Participants can text in and receive personalized intervention with trained professionals. As of the launch of the program, thirty-one (31) youths have subscribed to the program and twelve (12) of are currently receiving treatment.

Orange County is proud to be one (1) of two (2) localities piloting this program. Prevention and education not only save the environment, empower our youth, reduce healthcare expenditures, and promote overall wellness in the community.

While peer to peer teaching and communication are effective, the Youth Council don't stop their efforts on our local streets. On their trip to D.C. with the Office on Youth last April, they composed letters to their congressperson to help bring awareness to officials about the toxicity of tobacco litter and advocating for more stringent rules for those who market and sell tobacco to minors. Start local but think global!

This initiative would not be successful without the support of The Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth Tobacco Grant Fund monies that are issued through a competitive grant process. For the past several years, the Orange County Office on Youth has received on average \$30,000 from this program. The funds are used to provide prizes for the Take Down Tobacco contests, the production of educational materials for the public, the "This is Quitting" help line for vaping cessation, and the development of materials for advertising.

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of our youth, Orange County is cleaner, safer, and healthier.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM

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