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## Teenagers enlisted to persuade teens to stop smoking

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The state Health and Wellness Trust Fund's initiative to fight teen smoking has enlisted the help of teens, among them La'Queaja Percell, 16, a junior at City of Medicine Academy in

She has been working for two years with a program called Tobacco Reality Unfiltered. She goes to two meetings a month, and she gives presentations about the evils of smoking to middle and elementary school students. She also sets up information tables at several athletic events

Percell says she got involved because her mother smokes, and she wants her to stop. "I figure I can find a way to help her and other people as well," she said.



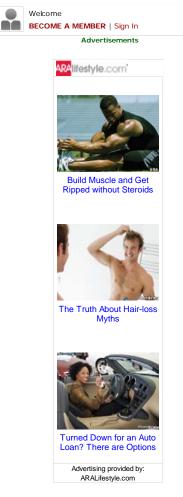
La'Queaja Percell, 16, of Durham, makes presentations to teenagers about the evils of smoking.

She said some students blow her off, but many actually listen. What gets their attention the most is the cost of smoking. She tells them that for the cost of a pack of cigarettes a day for a year -- well over \$1,000 -- they could buy a laptop computer or a Nintendo Wii.

"We have a PowerPoint that we show, and  $\ensuremath{\mathsf{I}}$ can hear them going, 'Oh my gosh,' " she said.

Percell says she has only one friend who smokes regularly, and although many teenagers still think it's cool to smoke, she thinks smoking is less popular than it used to be among high school students.

"It's not near what it used to be," she said.









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