

# THE ANSR

Association for Nonsmokers - Minnesota

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## PARTNERS SPOTLIGHT

# Youth and the fight against the tobacco industry

By Claire Rossez  
Special to ANSR

Flavored tobacco is a personal topic for William: His younger sister once told him she wanted to try some but did not know how to get it. He said, “I just knew my mom wouldn’t [let her have it]... and I knew it was not for kids.”

William’s sister was about seven years old at the time, a startling demonstration of how the tobacco companies’ marketing pulls in even young children. This experience showed William how being a youth who is targeted by the tobacco industry means it is up to him to lead the fight against the industry.

At first glance, William seems to be a typical 12-year-old. He just finished the sixth grade, is part of the stage crew in his school’s musical, and likes to get involved in the community. The work he does and the wisdom he possesses, however, are what set him apart from most kids, and adults too.

William works with a group called Vision in Living Life: Change is Possible (VILL), a local youth leadership program that promotes growth through



ANSR staff photo

**Youth advocate William Williams speaks with Rep. Carlos Mariani in 2015 about the dangers of flavored tobacco. William works with the youth group Vision in Living Life: Change is Possible.**

community engagement. It is one of ANSR’s partners. William volunteers to raise awareness in the Twin Cities and to advocate against smoking and the tobacco industry. He is so passionate about combatting the harms of tobacco, and has twice gone to the State

Capitol to speak to his legislators.

“At the Capitol, I [talked] about how flavored tobacco was really targeting kids,” he says. “I was nervous...I thought that they wouldn’t listen to me because I’m

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just a kid. Then I start thinking about how I can make a big change.”

William is perfect for fighting tobacco because of the message he sends: Youth will not stand to be targeted by tobacco companies, and they will defend themselves until the situation is amended. Despite his initial worries about lobbying, William said he’s proud of his work, because he was actively engaging to improve a serious problem within his community.

He also saw how the best way to initiate change is to go directly to the people who can make it happen, not simply raise awareness. VILL played a key role in convincing the city council in St. Paul to raise the price of flavored tobacco products and to restrict the sale of those items to 18-over tobacco-only stores. William and his peers met with every St. Paul city council member to discuss the issues and to emphasize the importance of setting regulations that will protect youth.

William also likes to educate his classmates on the dangers of smoking. “I inform them about... how us kids and our ethnic group are being targeted,” he said, referring to tobacco companies’ manipulative marketing efforts. This topic bothers William the most because minorities frequently are less educated, work minimum



ANSR staff photo

**William testified before the Saint Paul City Council in January about flavored tobacco. He talked about his younger sister’s interest in the colorful packaging and child-friendly flavors.**

wage jobs, live in low-income housing, and are susceptible to tobacco companies’ ploys.

He said these people often use tobacco as a coping mechanism, but that they usually cannot see how tobacco companies target them, nor do they understand the dangers of tobacco.

The message he tells others about smoking is: “Don’t do it because it may cost you your life. (Youth) might think it’s kind of cool because they think that it’s cool to do something that adults do, and they want to be older.”

William’s passion for his work

against tobacco is an impressive mark of bravery and leadership for someone at such a young age, setting an admirable example for his peers.

Tobacco companies might be targeting youths, but William is willing to stand up against them and fight back. He understands the necessity of taking the initiative to have important conversations that can bring about the change he wants to see in the world.

*Claire Rossez attends the University of St. Thomas and wrote about William as part of a joint venture with ANSR.*

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## Give to the Max Day 2016

Give to the Max Day 2016 is just around the corner. The Association for Nonsmokers-Minnesota works hard to protect Minnesotans from the harms of tobacco. To help ANSR with this

endeavor, make plans to donate on Nov. 17, 2016. This is a great opportunity to help ANSR continue the work it does. Anyone interested can mail a check to ANSR or go to [www.ansrmn.org/](http://www.ansrmn.org/) donate

**give** TO THE **MAX**  
NOV. 17, 2016

## Policy Champions kick off new year

ANSR kicked-off its third year of the Policy Champions program this quarter. This is the largest cohort of Policy Champions ANSR has had with 13 individuals representing four priority populations: African/African American, American Indian, Latino and LGBTQ.

For the first time, the Policy Champions Program was opened up to individuals who were not alumni of ClearWay Minnesota's Leadership and Advocacy Institute to Advance Minnesota's Parity for Priority Populations (LAAMPP) program. That resulted in five new policy champions, who each have varying levels of experience in tobacco prevention and policy advocacy. They all have a great passion to advance policies that reduce tobacco-related health

disparities. All eight Policy Champions from last year returned to the program this year.

The first team meeting was held in early October. Policy Champions were oriented to the program and identified their priorities for the year. They were tasked with connecting with state legislative candidates to introduce themselves and get their support for important tobacco prevention policies, such as raising the age to purchase tobacco to 21 and restricting the sale of menthol and flavored tobacco products. Policy Champions will also work to educate their communities about tobacco prevention policies through community events, presentations, and writing letters to the editor.

### Live Smoke Free



### Live Smoke Free team makes policy goals

Congratulations to the LSF team, who met or exceeded all of their policy goals during SHIP 4 Year 1.

Over the past year, the LSF team worked with property managers and owners in Hennepin, Dakota, Wright, and Carver counties; as well as Bloomington, Edina, Richfield, and Minneapolis.

Their combined efforts resulted in 156 new smoke-free policies covering 268 buildings and properties. There are now 7,233 units being protected from secondhand smoke.

# Creative campaigns help promote tobacco-free policies

ANSR has been working with the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities and Macalester College for several years on their tobacco-free campus policies.

With support from ANSR, the U went tobacco-free in 2014 and Macalester followed shortly thereafter in 2015. Since the policies' enactment, ANSR staff has continued to work with the schools to make sure students, faculty, staff and visitors are aware that tobacco use is not allowed anywhere on campus and to ensure tobacco users looking to quit are connected to on-campus cessation help.

ANSR has helped each school develop unique campaigns tailored to their needs. At the U, ANSR helped create and launch the Share the Air Ambassador program, which is now in its second semester of existence. This program, supported by the MDH Tobacco-Free Communities grant at ANSR, recruits students, faculty and staff to be ambassadors for the tobacco-free campus policy. The ambassadors are trained to visit tobacco-use "hot spots" around campus and politely approach policy violators to remind them about the policy. The ambassadors also distribute free "Share the Air" chewing gum, with information about the cessation services available at Boynton Health Services printed on the pack.



Macalester College

This sign is part of a creative campaign to help promote tobacco-free policies on college campuses.

The program has been highly successful. The majority of policy violators have been cordial, immediately stop using tobacco and take the information about cessation resources.

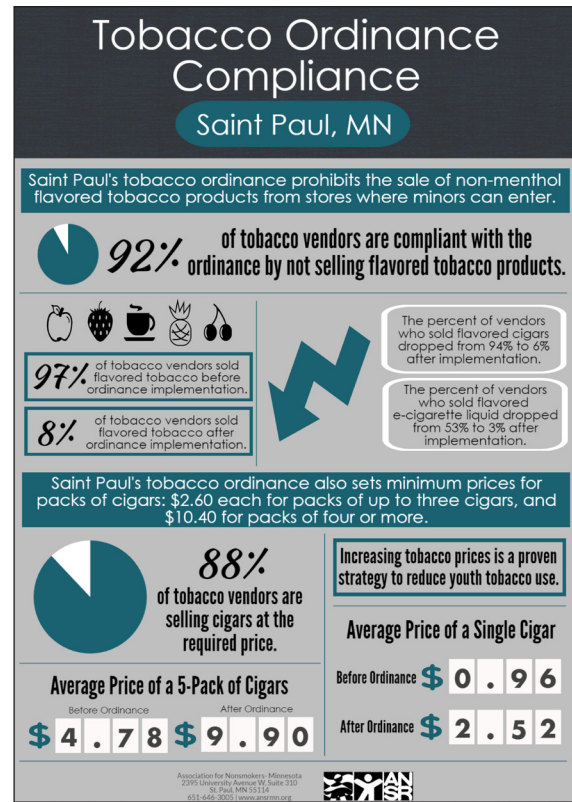
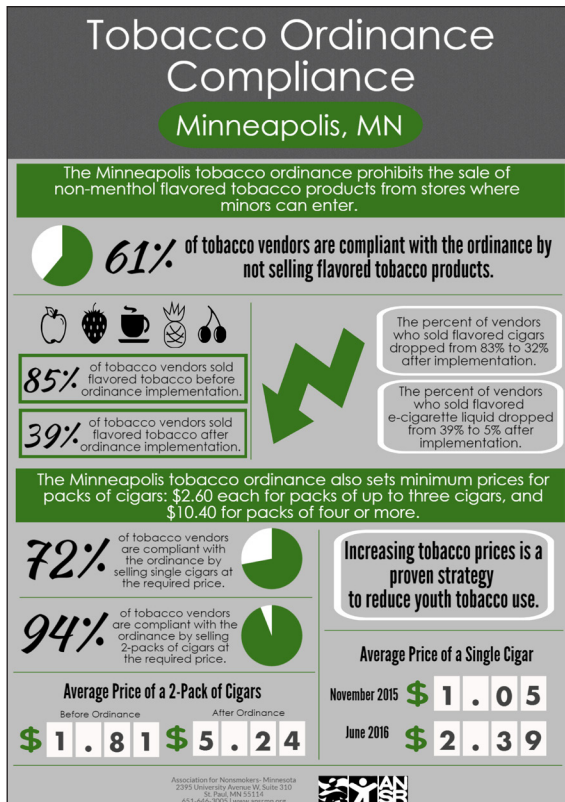
This semester, the ambassadors have another tool: free "Share the Air" water bottles they can give to anyone they encounter who is not using tobacco. This is another way to positively promote the policy and thank people for remembering to "Share the Air"

At Macalester, ANSR worked with Health and Wellness Center staff to design and implement the "Did You Know?" campaign to

raise awareness about the tobacco-free campus policy and illustrate how the policy aligns with Macalester values. The campaign, consisting of sandwich boards, posters, table tents, sidewalk decals and webpages, illustrates the negative impact tobacco has on the environment and social justice issues, such as child labor.

The policy is uniquely suited to Macalester and its focus on environmental sustainability and social justice. The campaign has been well-received and will continue to help Macalester support and promote its policy for years to come.

## Most vendors in compliance with ordinance



As part of a follow-up to recent policy work on flavored tobacco and cigar pricing in Saint Paul and Minneapolis, ANSR and its partner organizations paired up to complete a survey of Minneapolis and Saint Paul tobacco vendors to check on compliance with the new policies. The survey revealed that 61 percent of Minneapolis and 92 percent of Saint Paul tobacco vendors were compliant with the new flavored tobacco ordinance. Additionally, 88 percent of Saint Paul and 74 percent of Minneapolis vendors were selling single cigars at the required price. Survey results also revealed each city saw a drastic decrease in the number of vendors selling flavored cigars and flavored e-cigarette liquid.

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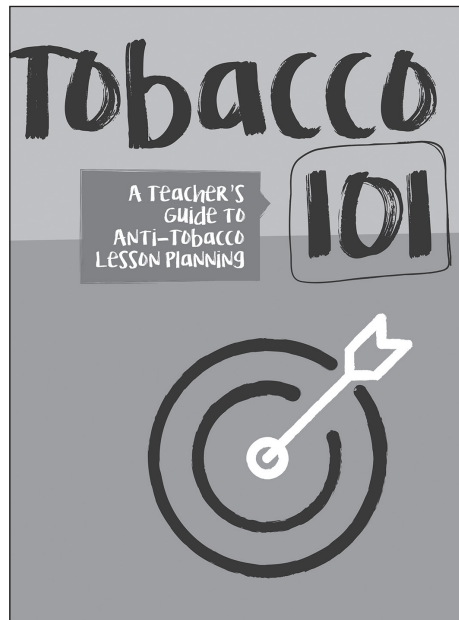
# ANSR fine-tunes introductory tobacco lesson book for training youth

ANSR has had a lesson plan curriculum for many years, created by a combination of staff and volunteers.

During the past year, ANSR staff has completed a major overhaul of the curriculum. ANSR staff worked closely with a local teacher to correct the format and provide clear instructions for people delivering the lessons.

The new lessons use a multi-media approach and include videos, articles and entirely new activities. ANSR partnered with designers at Mod & Company Design to create a bright and colorful look for the new lesson plans.

The book serves as an introduction to tobacco and policy



and includes seven comprehensive lessons that touch on a wide variety of topics including: ingredients

in cigarettes; basic harms of tobacco; the role of child labor in tobacco production; marketing and advertising; flavored tobacco, menthol and e-cigarettes; and, the role policy change can play.

Educated youth then survey stores to see how the tobacco industry is working in their neighborhood and create a plan to make policy change in their community.

ANSR will use the new lesson plan curriculum with community partners throughout the Twin Cities Metro. Partner organizations around the state will also have the lesson plan curriculum to use in support of their ongoing policy efforts.