

Students deliver anti-smoking message on KICK BUTTS DAY

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Imbler students and members of the safe communities coalition pose with a message they made with paper cups Wednesday. DICK MASON / The Observer

IMBLER — Seven students from La Grande, Elgin and Imbler high schools introduced children to the dark side of lighting up Wednesday.

The high school students, using sometimes powerful analogies, described the evils of smoking to children in La Grande, Imbler and Elgin while participating in the 17th annual national Kicks Butts Day.

“Every cigarette you smoke takes five minutes off your life,” said Imbler High School senior Kelsey Dewey during a presentation at Imbler Elementary School.

Dewey and the six other high school students also spoke at Stella Mayfield School in Elgin and at La Grande Middle School. Students at the schools were told that in some ways smoking is like consuming battery acid since cadmium, a component of batteries, is found in cigarettes.

Battery acid is just the beginning. Cigarettes also contain substances found in rat poison, dynamite, glass cleaner, gasoline, car exhaust and more, said Audrey Swinden, a sophomore at Elgin High School.

Swinden and Dewey, along with Elgin senior Rachael Jones, Elgin freshman Theresa Smolkowski, La Grande seniors Jordyn Roberts and Jenny Tracy and Imbler senior Cecily Magee made presentations for Kicks Butts Day as members of the Youth Council of the Union County Safe Communities Coalition.

“We are just trying to make the world a better place,” Swinden said.

Swinden and other members of the Youth Council stressed during their presentations that most people who smoke started when they were teenagers.

The Youth Council team ended their programs in Elgin and Imbler by taking children outside, where they helped their classmates make a statement.

Each child placed a paper cup in a cyclone fence with the aid of members of the Youth Council. Once all the cups were in place they spelled out “Tobacco Free.” This indicated that the children all wanted their schools to be tobacco free.

The Youth Council has a total of 10 members. Its members, in addition to the seven who gave presentations on Wednesday, are La Grande junior Abigail Harris, Cove senior Felicity Hicks and Justin Parker of the Lighthouse Apostolic Academy in Island City.

The Youth Council earlier succeeded in getting the Union County Board of Commissioners to pass a proclamation declaring Wednesday Kick Butts Day for the entire county. It also persuaded the cities of La Grande and Island City to pass similar proclamations.

The Youth Council is doing its antitobacco work under the guidance of Robin Wortman, coordinator of the Union County Safe Communities Coalition.

“This is an awesome group of kids,” Wortman said.