

NUMBERS CAMPAIGN

How do you get people to realize just how deadly tobacco is? By creating a way to show the “fatal figures” for your state or your community. There are a lot of easy ways to make numbers into something that people will understand. Turn the numbers into what they represent: LIVES. Khoa Ma, a youth advocate in Cincinnati, Ohio, developed this activity and Kaitlyn Reilly of Dover, NH, worked with Dover Youth2Youth to develop a similar event at her state capitol.

AGE GROUP: High school and college students, but can be modified for any age group.

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS: The more the better! If you're organizing a large event it is helpful to have at least 10–15 people for the actual event to make a bigger impact.

TIME: Two months.

RESOURCES: Whatever combination of props works for your event – markers, posters, stickers, flyers, t-shirts, lunch boxes, etc.

COST: Varies depending on your numbers campaign.

In Ohio alone, 52 people die every day from tobacco-caused disease. This event is about making people realize that statistics are not just numbers but that they represent mothers, fathers, sons and daughters. The following description is an example of how one group of teens brought those numbers to life. (Please note that this example is based on the number 52, since 52 people died each day in Ohio when this event took place.)

In Cincinnati, a group of youth took control of a high school for a day. With permission from the principal, they asked all faculty members to put “52 Ohio” on their boards, taking up at least 25 percent of the board. They also wrote “52 Ohio” and the name of their website, AAYAT.org, with cups on the fence by the school's main street. They gave out stickers with “52” printed on them to almost everyone in the school. During one of the lunch periods they had a booth set up in the main hall with posters, free pens, more stickers and anti-tobacco messages in fortune cookies. They also made 52 t-shirts with “RIP-52” written on the back and a tobacco statistic on the front, which were given to students to wear all day.

Throughout the day one member of their organization wore a 52 t-shirt with duct tape over his mouth that said “Truth Speaks Itself”. They did not tell anyone except the principal what they were doing, and all day students tried to guess what 52 Ohio meant. During last period they made an announcement that by the end of the day 52 Ohioans would have died from tobacco-caused diseases. As the students walked out after the school day, they handed out fliers with this same message.

In New Hampshire, Dover Youth2Youth coordinated a campaign that alerted the public and elected officials about the fact that 308 youth start smoking every month in New Hampshire. They had 308 lunchboxes, each representing one youth who started smoking that month. They chose lunchboxes because colorful lunchboxes are associated with youth rather than with adults. The lunchboxes were displayed at the state capitol and quickly got the attention of law makers and the media.

People realize that statistics are not just numbers but that they represent mothers, fathers, sons and daughters.

TURN THE NUMBERS INTO WHAT THEY REPRESENT: LIVES.

Other ideas to bring numbers to life:

- Blast everyone with your number a few days before your event, but keep the meaning a surprise. Announce your number over the PA system at school, hand out flyers or buttons with your number on them, hang up posters – whatever you can do to get your message out. Reveal what your number stands for on KBD.
- Organize a rally at the mall with teens holding posters with tobacco statistics (you can find these statistics and other state-specific numbers at tobaccofreekids.org).
- Hold a rally in front of city hall.
- Head to a park and make chalk drawings of the number of bodies.

Follow-up:

This event should empower people to get involved in the fight against tobacco. During the event, give people a chance to get more involved and take action on their own. What can people do after the event?

Here are a few ideas:

- Create a petition to have a smoke-free campus, community or city if it's not already smoke-free.
- Organize a rally in support of smoke-free policies at the center of your school.

