## BACKGROUND

Youth tobacco use remains one of Arkansas's greatest challenges. To help lower youth tobacco use, the Arkansas Department of Health Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Program (TPCP) established four grassroots programs through the SOS media and educational campaign. Each year, SOS strives to implement the following programs:

- Coloring Contest
- Drama Contest
- Essay Contest
- Banners in Schools Educational Program

### PROGRAMS

### **Coloring Contest** (Started 2003)

Implemented through public and private schools, this contest is for students in kindergarten through fifth grade. Artwork features the 'Clean Air Avengers' and delivers a prevention message.

**Drama Contest "The Big Pitch Film Festival"** (Started 2004) Teens in middle, junior, and high schools create and submit tobacco-free television spots that speak directly to other teens.

#### Essay Contest (Started 2005)

This prevention contest allows students in grades 2-9 to submit essays about a tobacco-related theme which changes annually.

**Banners in Schools Educational Program** (Started 2006) Schools request banners with prevention messages to display in hallways, gymnasiums, auditoriums, and classrooms. Messages focus on how the tobacco industry tries to manipulate youth. The contest is geared toward middle and high school students.

# **"TOBACCO CESSATION AND PREVENTION EFFORTS: STAMP OUT SMOKING TARGETS YOUTH THROUGH GRASSROOTS PROGRAMS."**

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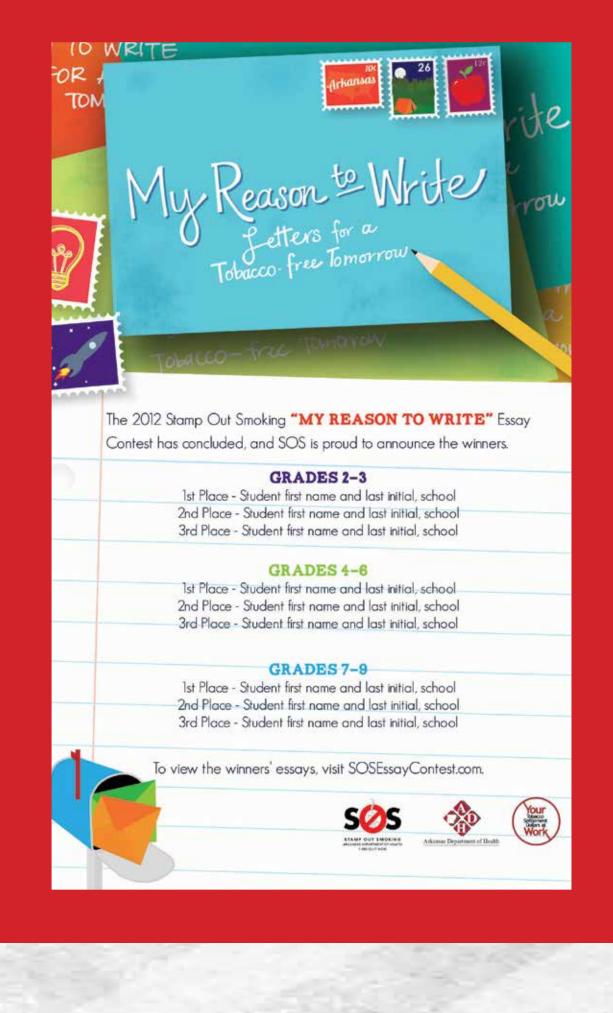
**Drama Contest** 



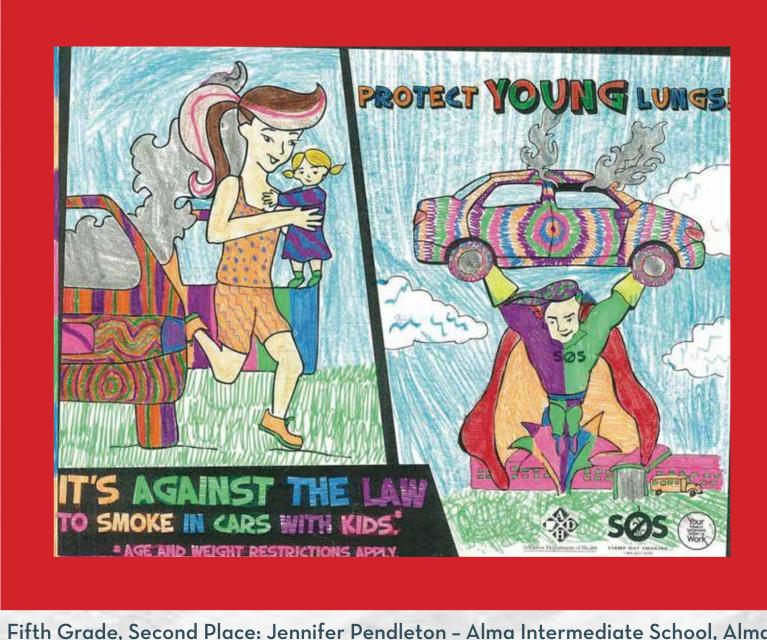
**Banners in Schools** 

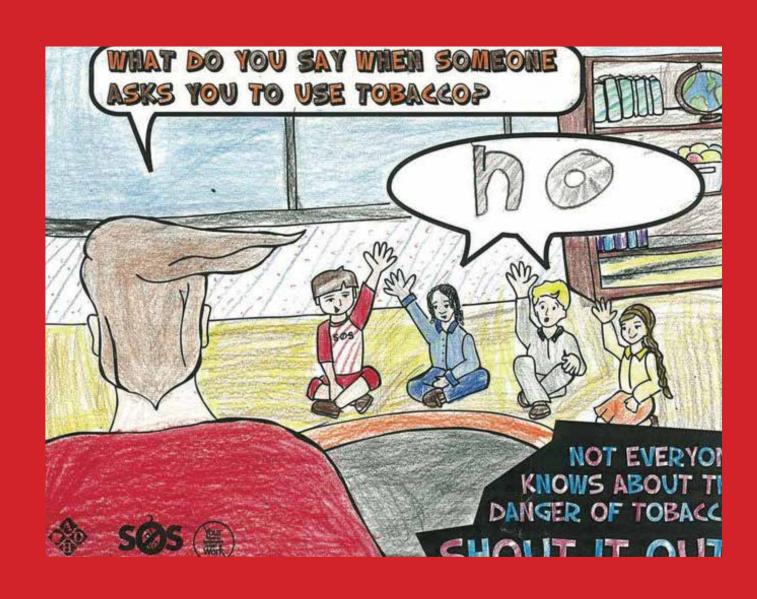


**Essay Contest** 



### **Coloring Contest**





Second Grade, Second Place: Bretlin Paul - Malvern Elementary School, Malver

# EVALUATION METHODS AND RESULTS

Success for the programs is measured respectively by the number of youth participating, video entries, coloring pages, essays, or other materials submitted. The number of schools and counties participating, website page views, 'People's Choice' votes, social media engagement, earned media value, and press coverage are also measured. Winning videos are placed on statewide or regional media buys. Since 2003, SOS has received 429 video submissions, 7,920 essays, and 57,526 coloring pages. Additionally, 499 banners have been placed in Arkansas schools. In 2012, 167 schools participated in the Banners Program, placing the SOS message in 69 out of 75 counties reaching 93,444 Arkansas students. Fiscal year 2013 includes not only evaluation of outputs, but also lesson plan implementation and outcome evaluations from students. The 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey (YRBSS) reveals a decline in the Arkansas youth smoking rate from 34.7 percent in 2001 (national average 28.5 percent) before the inception of interventions to 18.2 percent in 2001 (national average 18.1 percent). Smokeless use among males dropped from 24.9 percent in 2001 (national average 18.1 percent) to 20.3 percent in 2011 (national average 12.8 percent).

## CONCLUSIONS

Each year, these programs impact more students with their respective prevention messages. Youth are becoming increasingly involved through contest entries and social media channels. Combined with cutting-edge social media, these programs allow youth to spread tobacco-free messages to peers and adults in an engaging, educational, and impactful way. The programs, combined with other interventions, have contributed to lower tobacco use rates in Arkansas.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH AND/OR PRACTICE

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Best Practices have proven successful in reducing tobacco use through comprehensive tobacco control efforts. State and community interventions include educational campaigns, community engagement, parental involvement, or student programs. The Best Practice guidelines are used in developing all SOS grassroots programs. TPCP seeks to share these programs for replication by other states, and as a way to contribute to the national control evidence base.

