



### Rallying support

Ann Christensen, Health Educator, Susan Vileta, Program Coordinator, Chelsey Herring, JCCHS Student, Senator Frederickson, Aluxis Ingebritson, Valley Senior High Student, Dannielle Peters, Health Educator, Bailey Boots, Redwood tobacco ads below three feet in convenience stores. Photo submitted.

## Start Noticing brings group to capitol to present to legislators

By Daniela McGonigle  
Publisher/Editor

"I want to have a life without tobacco, and I want to be able to live without tobacco."

This statement was made to Bailey Boots, a senior at Redwood Falls High School by her friends, classmates and peers. She would carry that message from her young peers to the state capitol as part of a campaign meant to bring awareness to how it feels to be among the demographic the tobacco companies target most.

"Being able to visit with the Senators and Representatives made me realize that the changes we want are actually realistic," noted Boots. "All the people we talked to seemed sincerely interested in our cause and they signed our petition."

Boots traveled to the capitol with Ann Christensen, a Health Educator with Start Noticing. Other representatives from the group from Cottonwood, Jackson and Redwood counties also made the trip recently.

"We work with youth, parents, local community leaders and retailers to educate people to 'start noticing' tobacco advertising and its negative effect on youth," noted Christensen.

### Petition

The group brought with them a petition for the legislators to sign and support.

"It wasn't until I talked with Rep. Hamilton, (Cottonwood-Jackson) that I realized why I am a part

of Start Noticing. "Instead of just signing the petition he asked 'why should I? What does it mean to you that I sign?'" said Boots.

"That's when I said 'I truly hate tobacco, and I really do not want my life to be threatened or shortened because of it.' Boots described herself as a young woman who wants to live life to the fullest and with the support of Senators like Senator Frederickson and Senator Vickerman, she believes such a life will be possible.

"This experience has strengthened my belief in this program and I know that little by little we can save lives," said Boots.

**Fighting the fight**  
"We focus on point-of-sale advertising," said Christensen. "Why? Because tobacco companies do."

The tobacco companies spend almost 35 million dollars a day (90% of their ad budget) advertising their products at the place where they can influence us most easily and often... the places where tobacco is sold.

"We did an assessment of convenience stores, gas stations, grocery stores in our counties in February 2008 and we found LOTS of ads and special deals," said Christensen. "There were ads everywhere inside the store, outside the store, doors, windows, ceiling, floor, counters and they were next to candy and at three feet and below."

Therefore, the goal for 2010 is to continue to raise awareness of such efforts by tobacco companies and to deal with those efforts as effectively as possible.

"One of our main goals in 2010 are partnering with more stores to reduce their advertising and voluntarily remove their tobacco ads at three feet and under," said Christensen.

The group spent about 20 minutes discussing their efforts and they garnered the support of Senator Frederickson and others.

Since 2008, 12 stores in Redwood, Jackson and Cottonwood counties have signed agreements with Start Noticing regarding the placement of tobacco ads.



## Starting to notice

A group of students from southwest Minnesota recently made a trip to the Capitol in St. Paul to meet with legislators and to talk about the Start Noticing campaign. The campaign stresses the importance of reducing the amount of tobacco advertising in businesses to youth where those products are sold. Bailey Boots of RVHS (above) talked with District 21B Rep. Paul Torkelson during the visit. The Start Noticing campaign is also making a difference locally, as businesses are beginning to commit to reducing advertising geared toward youth. Paulette Kosei (left) of P&K in Redwood Falls recently signed a pledge not to place tobacco advertising at three feet or below in her convenience store. Ann Christensen of Redwood County Public Health and a member of the Start Noticing group was on hand for the pledge signing.

## No smoking in a vehicle with children bill making its way through state legislature

Smoking in vehicles where children are present would be prohibited under a bill heard by the House Health Care and Human Services Policy and Oversight Committee. Rep. Nora Slawik (DFL-Maplewood) sponsors HF379, which would allow peace officers to issue citations for the proposed offense only if a vehicle is stopped for another violation. Slawik said she does not intend to move her bill through the committee process or add it to other legislation this year. "The time will come — we're probably not there yet," she said. Secondhand smoke in vehicles is particularly harmful to children because their breathing rates are faster and their developing lungs take in more toxins, said Natalie Johnson Lee, executive director of the Minnesota African American Tobacco Education Network. Black children have significantly higher rates of asthma and other smoking-related conditions compared to other children, she said. Other bill proponents, including 13-year-old Joe Chlebeck, encouraged legislators to protect young children who cannot speak for themselves. Chlebeck compared riding in a smoke-filled vehicle to "being in prison and a gas chamber."

## When future discussion of the bill occurs, debate will likely center on encroachment on to private property, said Rep. Laura Brod (R-New Prague).

A companion, SF359, sponsored by Sen. Sandy Pappas (DFL-St. Paul), awaits action by the Senate Health and Human Services Budget Division.