

www.news14.com

Smoking down among N.C. teens

Updated: 9/28/2006 2:29:46 PM

By: David Kernodle, News 14 Carolina

FAYETTEVILLE -- Fewer North Carolina teenagers are lighting up, according to a report from the North Carolina Health and Wellness Trust Fund. State officials credit tobacco-free policies in most public school districts for the decline.

Brandon Smith says it seems like in every class he's told to steer clear of cigarettes.

"I think it's helping but really it's on yourself to choose whether to smoke or not," he said.



According to the survey, more than 74 percent of middle school students and 45 percent of high school students have never smoked.

Smith doesn't smoke, nor does he want to. He is a varsity basketball player and says he doesn't want to put that in danger.

According to a 2005 North Carolina tobacco survey, the number of students like Smith is growing by leaps and bounds. The survey reports that more than 74 percent of middle school students and 45 percent of high school students have never smoked.

There are currently 78 school districts that are 100 percent tobacco free, meaning students aren't the only ones banned from lighting up -- so are faculty and staff.

"I think it's important for young people to have role models in the teachers and adults that they see every day," said Carol Hudson, of Cumberland County Schools. "That has played a major part in watching these numbers go down."

Administrators are pleased by the survey results. They say if a

student hasn't started smoking in high school, he or she is less likely to do so after graduation.

Smith says a lot of his classmates light up and the pressure to do the same is tough, but his friends, family and teachers help him say no.



Brandon Smith, a varsity basketball player, says he doesn't smoke and doesn't want to.

Cumberland County school officials plan to begin a Native American anti-smoking campaign later this year. They say Native Americans are above the national average for tobacco use.

Copyright © 2006 TWEAN d.b.a. News 14 Carolina