

## Thanks to schools who battle smoking

**Editor:**

I would like to commend Drew Kerr on his article "Today's lesson: Quitting" in the Wednesday, Feb. 24 edition of *The Post-Star*. It is great to see schools take a proactive approach to helping their students and staff kick the tobacco habit. But I would also like to recognize and congratulate the 19 public schools in Warren and Washington counties who are also fighting the war against tobacco.

The schools in Warren and Washington counties are also participants in the Tobacco-Free Healthy Schools Program — a grant-funded program through the New York State Tobacco Control Program and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Saratoga County. As a participant in the program, schools are provided free resources and technical assistance to develop, communicate, and enforce effective tobacco-free policies in order to establish and sustain tobacco-free environments. Research shows that students who attend schools with strong and strictly enforced tobacco-free policies are less likely to use tobacco.

We all understand the devastating health impact of tobacco use. Tobacco use continues to be the single most preventable cause of death in the United States. Cigarettes alone result in more than 25,000 deaths annually in New York state, and 389,000 kids under the age of 18 will ultimately die prematurely from smoking. Preventing and reducing tobacco use and preventing exposure to secondhand smoke are the most important public health actions we can take to improve the health of New Yorkers.

I applaud and thank all the school administration and staff in Warren and Washington counties on your continued efforts to provide a healthier and tobacco-free school environment.

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