Reducing Youth Smoking in Greater Kansas City

The Problem:
» 24.1% of Kansas high school students are current tobacco users. (*Nationwide Avg. 22.4%*)
» 23.1% of Missouri high school students are current tobacco users.
» 22% of Kansans are current cigarette smokers. (*Nationwide Avg. 21.2% - Ranked 31st*)
» 25% of Missourians are current cigarette smokers. (*Ranked 43rd*)
» Approximately 90% of adult smokers start before age 18.
» The primary cigarette source for underage smokers is their 18 to 20 year old peers.
» Adolescent brains are still developing and are uniquely sensitive to nicotine addiction.
» While youth cigarette smoking in our community and across the county is slowly declining, e-cigarette use among youth has more than doubled in recent years.

Our Proposal:
» Increase the minimum age of sale and purchase of tobacco products, e-cigarettes, vapor products and paraphernalia to 21.

The Health Impact:
» A March 2015 Institute of Medicine study estimated that Tobacco 21 would reduce smoking among 15-17 year old by 25% and among 18-20 year olds by 15%.
» Data from Needham, MA shows a nearly 50% reduction in tobacco use by teens since their Tobacco 21 policy change in 2005. This decrease significantly exceeded reductions in peer communities over the same amount of time.
» Fewer smokers before 18 lead to fewer long-term smokers reducing overall smoking rates by an estimated 12%.

The Business Impact:
» A recent study from The Ohio State University estimated that the average smoker costs a private employer $5,218 per year in excess costs related to their smoking.
» The American Journal of Public Health - “*Retail Impact of Tobacco Sales Age to 21 Years*” - estimated only a 2% decrease in annual total tobacco sales due to Tobacco 21.

Supporters:
» 75% of U.S. adults, including 70% of current smokers.
» 94 cities in seven states and the entire state of Hawaii have passed Tobacco 21.
» More than 100 organizations throughout the KC metro area.