



## Success Story

October 2020

### Partnership with African American Community Helps Keep Flavored Tobacco Out of Youth Hands in Oroville

#### At a Glance

Working with several community partners, the African American Family & Culture Center (AAFCC) leveraged powerful youth voices, built community awareness and support from among Oroville’s African American community for an ordinance to eliminate the sale of flavored tobacco products. In January 2020, the City of Oroville approved legislation prohibiting the sales of flavored tobacco products, including menthol, making it the only one of five jurisdictions in Butte County to have adopted such legislation.

#### Approach

Oroville was the first of five jurisdictions in Butte County to pass Tobacco Retail License legislation in March 2013. The legislation did not address the issue of flavored tobacco products however it did limit tobacco retail density, which gave supporters the thought that with targeted education, there would be support found for additional tobacco control efforts. In 2015, AAFCC joined the California Health Collaborative’s Smoke-Free North State (SFNS) Advisory Board and was engaged to generate community awareness and build support within Oroville’s African American community, which comprises 4.8% of the City’s population and is the largest in California north of Sacramento. Education



campaigns focused on two main issues: marketing of flavored tobacco products to youth and the growing use of e-cigarettes.

“Two things that really helped this happen was relationships in the community and the ability to educate the community about how the tobacco industry was targeting our youth,” said Bobby Jones, Sr., AAFCC’s executive director. “It became about ‘How can we give our youth a chance to avoid using this addicting product that can harm them.’”



## Key Community Organizing Strategies and Tactics

### Collecting Data

Working with SFNS, AAFCC staff and other community volunteers conducted annual Store Observation Surveys to assess the availability of flavored tobacco products among Oroville retailers beginning in 2015. *The results of the survey revealed a significant market change since 2013 – the presence of e-cigarettes jumped from 40% to 86% of stores, an increase of 115% in three years.*

### Building Community Support

Over the five-year project period, AAFCC staff and members engaged in a number of activities to educate and build community support through tabling community events, speaking and presenting at City Council and Planning Commission meetings.

As a member of the SFNS Advisory Board, the AAFCC engaged in discussions with community leaders and council members, leveraging personal relationships to bring attention to the marketing of tobacco products to youth.

“We were both tapping into existing relationships and cultivating new relationships,” Jones said. “Many of the council members have kids, so it was painting the picture of how these flavored tobacco products were targeting youth.”

In 2018, AAFCC’s engagement intensified through a subcontract to conduct the California Health Collaborative’s health education efforts in the area. That year, two AAFCC staff participated in Capitol Information & Education Days, an annual event to educate state lawmakers on local tobacco issues. AAFCC also gave presentations in the community, participated in local events at community centers and schools to build awareness and distributed literature

about youth tobacco use of flavored tobacco products, particularly in conjunction with e-cigarettes.

“Many people didn’t realize all the different kinds of devices that were out there for e-cigarettes and were unaware that something that looked like a USB could be a smoking device,” Jones said, adding while vaping technology worked to eliminate traditional tell-tale signs of tobacco use, such as smoke and smell, the candy- and fruit flavored products such as were designed with youth tastes in mind. “To hear about kids doing it (vaping) in class was really eye-opening.”

### Leveraging Youth Voices

In 2017 and 2019, AAFCC participated in a Photovoice project and forum, designed to educate the community on youth’s perspective of the targeting of menthols, and flavored and electronic cigarettes to build support for the prohibiting sales and distribution of these products. During the 2017 event, AAFCC served as a judge for the entries and promoted the event. In 2019, AAFCC sponsored the event and trained youth and young adults through the Black Student Union, conducting presentations about the contest through junior and senior high schools in Oroville. The event, which provided an important outlet for students to share their experiences and recognize the power of their voices, culminated in January 2020, when the winning entry was made into a billboard displayed in the community.

“It was really great to give these kids an opportunity and give them a place to talk about the issues,” said Joshua Edwards, AAFCC’s Smoke Free Outreach Coordinator. “It’s about being empowered and understanding that you have a voice to create change in the community. Once that’s turned on, it can’t be stopped.”



Collaborating with AAFCC, California Health Collaborative also worked with Live Spot, a prevention program that works with teens, to train youth leaders. Youth created signs of support and developed two-minute speeches to offer their testimony during the City Council meetings.

“Once we made it about the youth, it was a slam dunk,” Jones said.

“When the youth spoke about what they saw on their campuses, it had a big impact on educating people about the issue,” Jones said.

## Results

In January 2020, Oroville City Council passed a policy prohibiting the sale of all flavored tobacco products, with an effective date of March 1, 2020. Due to restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, a fifth tobacco retail store observation survey was conducted by phone by two adult volunteers from AAFCC in May 2020. *Of the 34 tobacco retailers within the city limits of Oroville, 22 were successfully contacted and indicated that they did not have menthol cigarettes (100.0%) or sweet flavored swisher sweets (95.5 %).*

## What’s Next?

While the Smoke-Free North State grant ended in June 2020, new project funding started July 2020 which includes a subcontract enabling AAFCC to expand its work beyond Oroville to reach communities throughout Butte and Yuba Counties. AAFCC will be the lead on a point-of-sale campaign for these two counties in addition to an objective focused on creating and supporting Black Student Unions which will further the equity work around tobacco and other issues.



## Demonstrating Community Support

AAFCC conducted a variety of educational and outreach methods to maximize community penetration, including individual phone calls and a postcard campaign. This effort, combined with other efforts among other SFNS partners, resulted in more than 1,000 signatures of support.

Although the project faced many obstacles over the years due to competing issues, community crises and changes in council membership, ultimately the data collected increased the public attention, and youth involvement made it an issue that could not be ignored.



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