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ORANGE COUNTY OFFICE ON YOUTH ANNOUNCES AWARD OF THREE-YEAR VIRGINIA FOUNDATION FOR HEALTHY YOUTH TOBACCO PREVENTION GRANT

Orange County, VA – The Orange County Office on Youth is pleased to announce it has been awarded a three-year grant from the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth (VFHY) in the amount of \$90,000 to address youth tobacco prevention/cessation in Orange County.

This grant funding, which was made available July 1, 2021, will aid Office on Youth efforts to spearhead a youth vaping cessation campaign in Orange County, Virginia. Among other activities, the *This is Quitting* program developed by the Truth Initiative, America’s largest nonprofit public health organization, will be customized to fit the needs of Orange County and target youth vaping users. *This is Quitting* is a new anonymous text message program and the first-of-its-kind, helping more than 300,000 youth and young adults on their journey to quit vaping.

Following the Spring 2019 administration of the CDC Youth Risk Behavior Survey, Office on Youth staff recognized a critical need to target youth vaping use based on survey results. Of the 419 10th through 12th graders surveyed, 35.6% reported using electronic vaping products in the 30 days prior to the survey, up from 15.1% in 2017, and substantially higher than the 13.2% national average.

Alisha Vines, Office on Youth Director, stated “We are excited that the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth has given Orange County the opportunity to continue our tobacco cessation efforts. Over the past 12 years, VFHY has provided the Office on Youth grant funds to educate youth and families on the detriments of tobacco use, both immediate and long-term. This new funding opportunity will allow us to focus on the growing problem of vaping which not only effects our community but has become a worldwide health danger. Many of our residents have questioned what we are doing to continue this fight, and we are now able to say we are fighting it head-on. This is very important funding for our office as we continue our important work towards positive youth development for all of Orange County children so they can be the positive leaders we need in the future.”

Other grant activities will include a hands-on, youth created, anti-vaping art/media campaign, as well as tobacco litter clean-up events, and education to inform Orange County residents about the harmful effects of tobacco litter. An event held in partnership with the Orange County Youth Council, the Orange County Litter Control Committee, and Girl Scout Troop 1024 earlier this year, resulted in an estimated 6,500 cigarette butts collected in just two hours. The harmful effects of tobacco product use are far-reaching and through this VFHY funding, the Office on Youth will continue to highlight the dangers of tobacco use, especially for youth.

About the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth (VFHY)

Established in 1999 by the Virginia General Assembly, the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth empowers Virginia’s youth to make healthy choices by reducing and preventing youth tobacco and nicotine use, substance use, and childhood obesity.

VFHY takes a comprehensive approach to prevention work that includes reaching about 50,000 children each year through classroom-based prevention programs in public schools, after-school programs, community centers, day cares and prevention programs across the state. VFHY's award-winning marketing campaigns deliver prevention messaging to more than 500,000 children annually. In addition, VFHY's research program provides scientific insight on methods to effectively reduce tobacco use. Since 2002, VFHY has funded 40 large research projects at universities throughout Virginia.

For additional information about the tobacco prevention work of the Orange County Office on Youth or the grant award received, please contact Ashley Jacobs, Program Coordinator, at (540) 672-5484 or visit www.orangecountyva.gov/officeonyouth. For additional information about the important work of the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth, please visit www.vfhy.org.

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