



**For Immediate Release**  
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### **YOUTH COUNCIL CLEANS UP TOBACCO LITTER DURING WINTER BREAK, SUPPORTS TOBACCO CESSATION EFFORTS**

ORANGE COUNTY, Va. – On December 21, 12 Youth Council members, along with staff from the Office on Youth, took to the streets of Gordonsville to clean up tobacco litter such as cigarette butts, packaging, and vape pens. Based on weight, it is estimated that nearly 4,080 cigarette butts were collected in just two hours! Three bags of non-tobacco litter were removed as well. This clean-up has become an annual event in the towns of Gordonsville and Orange.

Cigarette butts are the most littered item in world. Despite their cotton-like appearance, they are nonbiodegradable and are mostly made up of plastic fibers. They leach toxic chemicals, such as arsenic and lead, into the environment. Since tobacco use in any form is harmful to the user and the environment, the Youth Council is also dedicated to being peer advocates for the prevention of youth tobacco use. With funding assistance from the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth (VFHY), the Orange County Office on Youth has been able to assist the Youth Council in these efforts.

An upcoming Take Down Tobacco Day Contest hosted by the Office on Youth is an example of this support. Open for entries from February 12 to March 11, 2024, this contest will encourage Orange County middle and high school students to create an advertisement against flavored tobacco products. The winning entry receives an iPad Pro and a \$250 scholarship for creative software applications. More information is available at [www.orangecountyva.gov/976/Take-Down-Tobacco-Day-Contest](http://www.orangecountyva.gov/976/Take-Down-Tobacco-Day-Contest).

For free and confidential assistance with vaping cessation, Orange County youth and young adults can text VAPEFREEOC to 88709. Those enrolled will receive up to 12 weeks of daily text messages with quit date assistance. The text messages show the real side of quitting to help young people feel motivated, inspired, and supported throughout their quitting process. Quit Now Virginia provides free information and coaching by telephone, or online, to those desiring to quit smoking or using tobacco. Dial 1-800-QUIT-NOW or visit [QuitNow.net/Virginia](http://QuitNow.net/Virginia) for free, confidential assistance available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

For more information about the tobacco clean-up event, tobacco prevention programming in Orange County, or programs made possible by VFHY funding, please contact Robyn Chapman, Office on Youth Grant Program Manager, at (540) 672-5484, option 1, or at [rchapman@orangecountyva.gov](mailto:rchapman@orangecountyva.gov).

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