

What to do about vaping in Del Norte?

October 26, 2019



The Tobacco Free Del Norte Coalition hosted a “Vaping and Youth” town hall meeting Oct. 24 to discuss the growing dangers of youth vaping and possible solutions in Del Norte County.

As attendees arrived, they were asked to participate in a survey and communicated their responses by placing stickers on poster boards. Then, six people from the community, including two high school students, spoke to the handful in attendance.

Del Norte County Sheriff Erik Apperson presented statistics from the Center for Disease

Control and Prevention in Atlanta on youth and tobacco products. He made it clear he was not there to prohibit adults from deciding to use tobacco, but only to try to stop adolescent use.

He also pointed out two attendees in the audience, David and Suzanne Gearhart, owners of Crescent City’s only vape shop, High Tide Vapes. In the past, he said, he had conducted a sting operation where he sent youth into smoke shops to test if the owners would check their age. While many of the shops failed the test, he thanked the Gearharts for being vigilant about restricting underage sales.

At the end of the meeting, David Gearhart asked to speak and shared his full support of actions against youth vaping. While he credits vapes for saving his life from a cigarette addiction, he and his wife do not believe children should have access to vapes.

“We do not want youth to vape,” Suzanne Gearhart said. “We are with our community.”

Del Norte High School Vice Principal Alison Eckart said that just three years ago, she never thought vaping would be a problem at the school. Now, she confiscates vapes regularly, sometimes multiple one from the same student in one week. She reported that students are getting bolder and even vaping in the classroom.

While the school makes efforts to teach children the dangers of vaping, she said, she urged parents to talk with their children about it. “Encourage your kids to keep talking to the adults in their life.”

Two students from Standing Together Overcoming Addiction with a Radical Movement also spoke up seeing vaping in their classrooms and school bathrooms, urging the community to take action in helping their peers.