

Tobacco Awareness program conducts decoy operations across Del Norte

March 3, 2024



With the utilization of an underage decoy, the Del Norte County Tobacco Use Program (TUPP) officially observed six retail stores who reportedly sold tobacco products to an individual under the age of 21. These Young Adult Tobacco Purchase Surveys (YATPS) also called decoy stings are permitted to be conducted by law enforcement or government agencies like TUPP, in order to assess compliance with guidelines that prohibit the sale of tobacco products to underage individuals.

On December 21, TUPP sent a decoy into 19 retail operations across the City and Del Norte county. One half dozen stores reportedly sold tobacco products to an underage decoy. Of the six, five retailers declined to ask for valid age identification. One clerk checked identification of the minor but was unaware of the 21 year old age threshold to purchase tobacco products. Those stores found to be in violation will receive education and training assistance to help prevent the retailers and staff from future violations. Health Education coordinator Crystal Yang of the DN TUPP stating, “ Tobacco retailers have a key role in preventing youth access to

tobacco products so conducting decoy stings helps us to identify what's going on in our community. We'd like to thank retailers who are doing their part to prevent minors from using tobacco and nicotine products.”

Since 2016, California has raised the minimum age to purchase tobacco products from 18 to 21.

The Triplicate asked coordinator Yang if the TUPP outreach involved tribal tobacco retail operations with the Yurok, Elk Valley and Smith River Rancherias. Yang stated Federal, State and local governance involved only State law but promised to follow up with tribal entities and support the banning of tobacco sales to under age 21, including outreach to United Indian Health Care.

There were no criminal charges levied from the December operation. Yang reported the cost of the sting operation was modest and promised undercover decoy operations would continue.

Violation and administrative citations may result in tobacco retailer license revocation.