

SnoValley Star

Anti-tobacco push at Mount Si gets cyber-help

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By Sebastian Moraga

Students at Mount Si High School have designed a screensaver with images, statistics and messages to encourage students to quit smoking. This screensaver has the potential to be a lifesaver.

The screensaver was an assignment for students in Joe Dockery's digital imaging foundations class, and about 20 students participated. Students provided their own images, or images they downloaded from the World Wide Web.

Dockery said students had limits on what they could use. Students could use no images of people smoking, drinking or using drugs.

They could not just draw a cigarette inside a red circle and a stripe across it, Dockery said. They could not go negative, either.

"I wanted them to be hopeful positive messages," Dockery said of the screensaver's images, using the pan-and-frying-egg ad from the 1980s as example of a negative message.

Another example is the leathery face of a long-time smoker. That doesn't work on high school students, Dockery said.

"Kid sees his buddy smoking, he doesn't look like that," Dockery said.

Instead, the screensaver brings used pictures of smiling students, drawings of Winnie the Pooh's friends, or simply school colors, alongside statistics from the 2008 Healthy Youth Survey.

These statistics indicate a reality that might differ from what students think, Dockery said. More than 80 percent of the students at Mount Si do not smoke, the survey showed, and more than 70 percent did not drink alcohol in the 30 days prior to the survey.

Dockery credited school counselor and drug and alcohol prevention specialist Phoebe Terhaar with the idea for the screensaver.

Besides the computers, the screensavers will go on 42-inch screens around the school. That way, students not only will see the message more often, but students in the class get to see their work displayed.

This is the 10th year of the class, but the first year of the project, Dockery said. Some students took the project quite seriously, while a few had more of an attitude about it. Nevertheless, the project carried an important message, Dockery said.

"Students had a chance to educate people, correct misconceptions," Dockery said. "Prove to people that when they choose not to smoke, they are actually in the majority, they are actually being normal. That is one powerful message."

