

# Del Papa kicks off state's anti-smoking campaign

By Deborah Kohen  
Sentinel-Voice

Coinciding with a conference for substance abuse counselors and administrators at the Tropicana Hotel last week, Nevada Attorney General Frankie Sue Del Papa helped kick off a Food and Drug Administration-sponsored media campaign to curb teen smoking.

Prior to the press conference at the Tropicana, student volunteers from local high schools distributed FDA merchant kits to businesses selling cigarettes. The kits contained reminders that sales staff are legally required to check the identification of anyone under age 27 who wants to buy tobacco products.

Federal regulations prohibit the sale of tobacco to children under age 18.

The FDA is using humor in its attack on underage sales and use of tobacco. Signs and posters resemble

cartoons and carry catchy slogans. One poster reads, "You want to sell cigarettes to kids? Fine: \$250." Another shows a child wearing a black tee-shirt that reads, "Hi. I might be a federal agent."

The tee-shirt warns merchants that law enforcement officials might send teenagers to try to buy cigarettes.

Information compiled from the results of the campaign will be used to determine the rates at which underage youth succeed in buying tobacco products. Nevada's rate has decreased from 64 percent in 1994 to under 20 percent today, data shows.

Nationally, some 3,000 teens start smoking every day, but in Nevada, teen smoking appears to be decreasing, statistics show.

John Albrecht, senior deputy attorney general and architect of the state's crack-down program, said the reduction cannot be directly attributed to the state's efforts, but pointed out



FRANKIE SUE DEL PAPA

that they've happened simultaneously.

In 1995, the Legislature gave tobacco enforcement responsibility to the attorney general's office. This March, Del Papa announced a contract with the FDA that will lead to 3,300 new inspections of retail outlets.

Stores selling cigarettes will be inspected twice a year. Those who

skirt the rules will be rechecked after 90 days.

At the press conference, the FDA's Judy Woofenfeld applauded the decline in underage use and sale of tobacco.

Del Papa also chimed in: "All Nevadans can be proud of their part in the success of this program. Retailers, law enforcement, media, public health agencies, public schools and others have played a vital role."

The Nevada Bureau of Alcohol and Drug Abuse funds prevention programs in schools.

Victoria Johnson, a junior this fall at Cheyenne High School, participated in the awareness campaign because she wanted to do something positive and position herself as a role model for other teenagers. She says a handful of her friends smoke; she's pushing them to stop. She also wants to stop violence, which she says is an even bigger scourge for youth.

Johnson has been a member of Positive Choices, a nonprofit organization for teens by Belinda Thompson at Vegas Heights Community Center, 1201 Miller St., for two years.

Members spend their free time at the center and recruit friends to join, Johnson said, adding that having a good place to go and positive things to do deters risky behaviors like smoking and crime.

Vanessa Williams, director of a youth empowerment program called "We Rise," praised the tobacco campaign as one of the most positive efforts she's seen in a long time.

Williams thinks smoking can lead to bigger problems and that certain cigarette and alcohol companies worsen the problem by specifically targeting African-Americans. The money they spend to lure Blacks would be better spent on prevention programs, Williams said.



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Ventriloquist Duane Echols works with his puppet Alien during the Vegas Ventriloquist Convention '98 held at the Imperial Palace Casino last week.

## Ventriloquists convention has participants talking

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"A good joke is one ultimate and sacred thing which cannot be criticized. Our relations with a good joke are direct and even divine relations."

This quote from G.K. Chesterton graces a page of the guidebook for the Vegas

Ventriloquist Convention 98, which took place July 29-Aug. 2 at the Imperial Palace.

Back when Jimmy Nelson did an unforgettable Nestle's chocolate commercial with two dummies, Shari Lewis introduced Lamb Chop to the western world and Rick E. Layne became a regular on the Ed Sullivan

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## Survey: Black, white parents agree on a lot

Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON — School integration is a good idea but hardly worth the trouble it brings, according to a survey of black and white parents. They'd rather focus on high standards and tough discipline in their schools.

The survey by Public Agenda found a distinctive "lack of energy and passion for integration" among parents of both races. Although integration is an "attractive ideal, black and white parents both believe its implementation comes with serious downsides, and uncertain gains."

"Whites are fearful that integration will bring troubled children into local schools," said the report released last Tuesday by the nonpartisan group, founded by pollster Daniel Yankelovich and former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance.

"Blacks fear their children will be thrown into hostile and contentious school environments."

Black and white parents have "strikingly similar visions of what it takes to educate kids," it said. Parental involvement was a key ingredient in many answers.

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## When the Elks come marching in...

The Improved Benevolent Protective Order of Elks prepare to strut down Las Vegas Boulevard Tuesday for their Centennial International Parade.

Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy