

Kools

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Blends names like Kauai Kolada and Twista Lime.

Former Surgeon General David Satcher, director of the National Center for Primary Care at Morehouse, says the age of those smoking is probably younger than most people realize.

"Everyday, more than 4,000 youth ages 12 through 17 try a cigarette for the first time. We must prevent our children from taking up this deadly habit," Satcher said in a statement.

"Tobacco-related diseases take the lives of 45,000 African-Americans each year. If our youth never start smoking, these numbers will drastically decline."

The fact that the Kool cigarettes are mentholated — coupled with the continued promotions — gives the advocates special concern because of the popularity of the menthol brands among Black youths.

Of the 14 percent of African-American high school students who smoke, more than 79 percent smoke mentholated cigarettes (37 percent for Whites), the CDC reports. The overall high school smoking rate for Whites is 26 percent. The 14 percent Black rate is a reduction from 22 percent just six years ago, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

R. J. Reynolds, which merged with Brown & Williamson last month, rejects the assertion that the Kool products are or have been marketed to minors.

"Kool has been part of the music scene for a very, very long time. The music scene has changed. And so the connection between Kool and music has changed," says Brennan Dawson, spokeswoman for R. J. Reynolds. "The events that Kool sponsors are in adult only facilities. That means you'll have to be 21 or older to get in... We're taking these extraordinary steps to make sure we don't make them appealing to youngsters. And then, you get to retail where, according to state laws, you have to be over 18 and you have to show your drivers license. So, no, we didn't design it to appeal to young people."

Thirty attorneys general have taken legal actions to force Brown & Williamson to stop marketing to youth, arguing that some of the promotions violate a legal agreement made between the tobacco industry and 46 states in 1998, which included the promise not to market cigarettes to youth. As part of the agreement, states must no-

tify the tobacco organization within 30 days prior to suing them.

Those warnings have been given by Indiana, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Montana, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, Washington, Wyoming and the District of Columbia. Currently Maryland, New York and Illinois have suits pending against Brown & Williamson for its Kool Mixx campaign.

Although, the tobacco industry claims it doesn't target teens with the ads, a "House of Menthol" phone number listed on all boxes of Kool's flavored cigarettes says it must first check the age of anyone who dials the number, but does not thoroughly scrutinize callers.

A recording states that it must first verify the age of the caller. But, it only asks the caller to dial his or her date of birth and the zip code of residence not knowing if either is true.

After the sultry voice tells the caller to, "Listen up," for options, it begins to describe the cigarettes and, when prompted during business hours, provides retailers in that zip code area.

Dawson acknowledges that the check is not thorough and noted that Kool is not legally obligated to screen phone calls.

"Because you're not getting cigarettes," she says. "There's a difference between being on the telephone and buying a pack of cigarettes."

The descriptions featured on the colorful and stylish Kool Fusion packages and given over the phone could appeal to any age or race.

"Mintrigue, a deeply rewarding menthol experience that tantalizes, yet leaves you guessing as to the secret of its intriguing refreshment;" "Midnight Berry, a deep velvety, almost creamy sweetness envelopes all natural menthol freshness. Each is as enchanting and mysterious as the darkest night;" and "Mocha Taboo, inviting and surprising, Mocha Taboo will entice you with its sweet indulgence while leaving you with a refreshment that's unmistakably menthol."

Advocates give far more sinister descriptions.

"Slick packaging and tobacco flavoring can't hide reality. More than 45,000 African-Americans die each

year from tobacco related illnesses, surpassing all other causes of death, including AIDS, diabetes and accidents," says Lisa Fager, steering committee chair of the American Legacy Foundation's Partners for a Tobacco Free Society. "Targeting youth to make them tobacco users is the most cynical form of business."

Legacy is in the process of funding six national Black organizations, including the National Newspaper Publishers Association Foundation, with \$4.5 million in a three-year grant to fight the tobacco

industry by educating the public.

"A major need of the African-American community is the dissemination of information about the costs of tobacco use and other critical health issues so that individuals can make the right choice for their health and the health of their families," says Brian Townsend chairman of the NNPAF.

Anti-tobacco advocates say they will expand their efforts as tobacco companies escalate their marketing campaigns.

"One of the things that we

will continue to do is to stand up and speak out against this issue for sure," says Amber Hardy Thornton, executive vice president for Program Development at Legacy. "The American Legacy Foundation is dedicated to building a world where young people reject tobacco and anyone can quit."

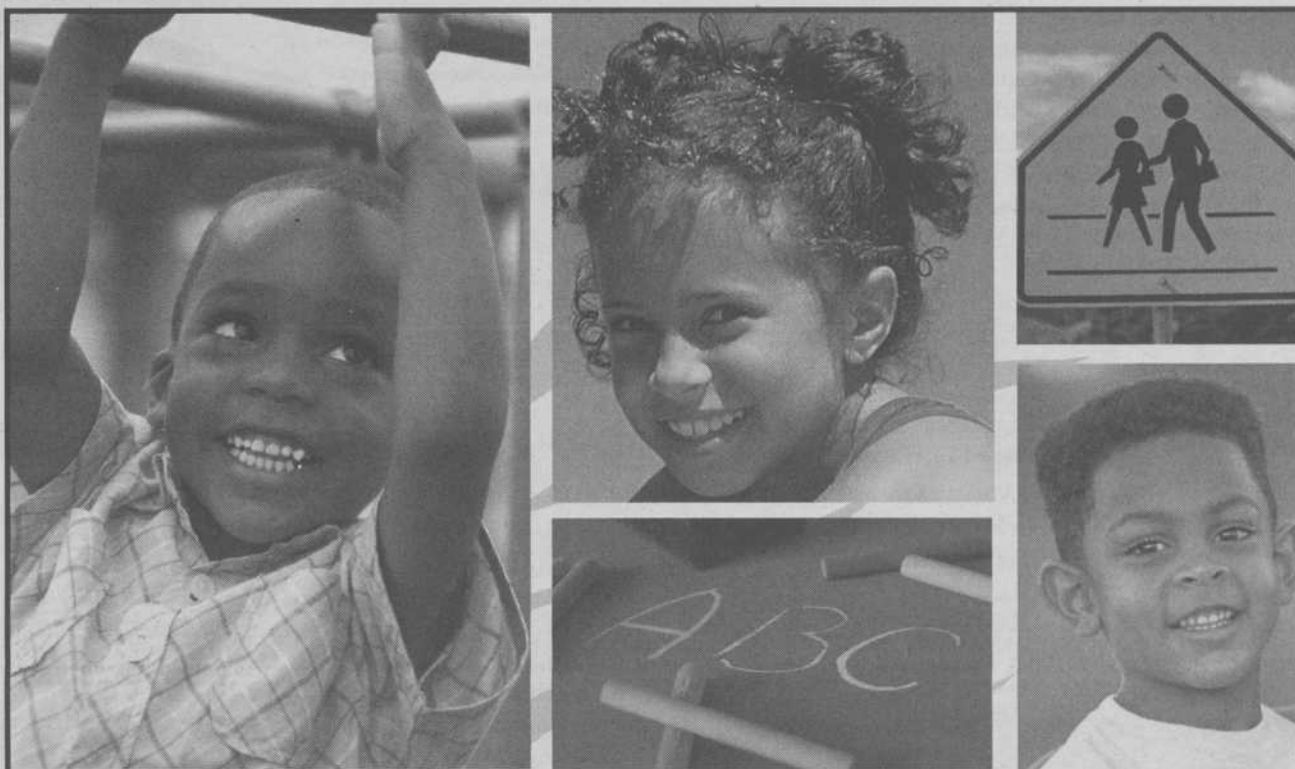
Thornton highlights Legacy's contribution of \$21 million to 30 community organizations to educate priority populations, including the Black community, on tobacco use and to help people quit.

The impact may be diffi-

cult to measure, but the bottom line is saving lives.

"I think we're making a huge impact, probably far more than many of the tobacco control advocates would ever have imagined at this point," says Sherri Watson Hyde, executive director of the National African-American Tobacco Prevention Network.

"It has helped to heighten the awareness. I think, people now, when they read that label, they pay attention to what it says and have a greater understanding of what that all means."



A healthy start for a healthy school year!

Children entering the Nevada school system for the first time require appropriate immunizations. Newer requirements include: hepatitis A, hepatitis B and chicken pox vaccination (if they have never had the chicken pox disease).

**Back-to-school immunization extended clinic hours:
Ravenholt Public Health Center • 625 Shadow Lane
Monday, Aug. 16-Friday, Sept. 3 • 8 a.m.-6 p.m.**

**Other clinic locations:
East Las Vegas, North Las Vegas, Henderson
Monday-Friday • 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.**

An administrative fee of \$15 per patient will be charged. Medicaid and Nevada Check Up are accepted. Please bring your insurance card, along with shot records.

All necessary paperwork is located on the health district's website (www.cchd.org). Bring completed forms to expedite your visit.

For clinic locations, hours and dates, call 383-1351.

