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# Teens are urging peers to kick the smoking habit

By **HEATHER ENNIS**  
Staff Writer

A team of teenage anti-tobacco activists is urging its peers to dump cigarettes for at least a day as part of a local campaign to help young people kick the habit.

The Make it your EX program encourages teens to trade in the cigarettes they would smoke in a single day for more useful items like T-shirts and sweatshirts—kind of like trading in a high school sweetheart who isn't worth the trouble.

The swap helps smokers see what it's like to go without a smoke for an entire day.

"Giving up smoking for even one day is the first step toward quitting," said Vaibhav Gupta, a student at Erindale Secondary School in Mississauga. "And quitting for one day is a definite success. It can turn into two days, a week or even more."

Led by Peel Health's youth tobacco advocacy group, the program has been well received in local schools. The team has collected hundreds of cigarettes at just a handful of events and the trade is already proving to be a starting point for quitters, said one of its Brampton members.

## Quit smoking for good

"Make it your EX was the extra boost of support that a girl at my school needed to quit smoking for good," said Clint Wilson, a Mayfield Secondary School student. "We're not anti-smoker, we're anti-tobacco industry, and there's a real difference."

The Peel team is using a low-pressure, common sense approach to getting students to butt out. The shock factor of government ads featuring cancer-riddled lungs and rotten teeth may be wearing off, but the cool factor that comes with manipulative tobacco advertising is alive and well, said another Brampton student.

"They want to appear rebellious," said Turner Fenton Secondary School student Jasleen Singh, who noted she's trying to show teen smokers that they're actually falling right into a trap set by cigarette manufacturers.

The team's slogan—*They trick. They kill. They lie. Let's extinguish the source*—doesn't demonize smokers, but refers to the ways the tobacco industry entices young people through product placement in movies and other parts of youth culture.

"Big tobacco is just trying to trick us into smoking by making it look cool and normal," said Singh. "We're passionate about helping our peers uncover the truth and stay away from tobacco."