

## Thanks for Asking

Cigarettes are the only product sold that, when used as directed, kill the customer. Unfortunately, this knowledge is not enough to keep millions of people from lighting up each day. Once addicted to the nicotine in tobacco, it is extremely difficult to stop.

Because quitting smoking is so hard, it makes “not starting” that much more critical. Sadly, almost 2,000 teenagers pick up the addiction every single day of the year. A third of these kids will eventually die from a tobacco-related illness. If these teens reach 19 years old without smoking, it is highly unlikely they will ever become nicotine addicted.

Why do kids pick up that first cigarette? The reasons are multiple and many are complex. But, there are several actions adults can take to lessen the odds of teenage addiction to nicotine. A vital first step is to prevent tobacco sales to minors.

In 1995, more than 80% of Macomb county retail establishments tested in a tobacco compliance check sold cigarettes to minors without asking for identification to check age. In 2008, as a result of a thirteen-year effort to educate retailers about the importance of keeping children tobacco free, Macomb County has reduced the sales to minors to 10%.

What can you do to help keep young people on a tobacco free path? Be vocal when you see a clerk ask for identification if a young person attempts to buy cigarettes. **By telling the clerk, “thanks for asking!” you are supporting the clerk’s efforts to follow the law.** More importantly, you are joining the many Macomb citizens who care about providing a healthy environment for young people. And please never buy tobacco for an underage person. It is both illegal and wrong.