

# TOBACCO FREE

ALLIANCE OF VIRGINIA

## Quarterly Meeting Sept 10, 2019

In attendance:

Aleks Casper, ALA  
Avis Thomas, VDH/RCHD  
Carolyn Halbert, VDH  
Chelsi Bennett, AHA  
Colleen Hughes, DBHDS  
Danny Saggese, VFHY  
Hanan Kourtou, AHA  
Jayne Flowers, VDH  
Joann Wells, VDH  
Kelly Fitzgerald, ACSCAN

Kim Herbstritt, Community Foundation of the  
Northern Shenandoah Valley  
Kristine Kohler, VCU  
Marge White, VFHY  
Natalie Pennywell, VCU  
Randy Koch, VCU  
Rita Miller, VDH  
Roberta Keller, Alexis Advisors  
Sally Beth Johnson, Radford University Carilion  
Sarah Birckhead, VDH  
Will Hockaday, VDH

### AGENCY UPDATES AND NEWS:

**Colleen Hughes** provided information on the status of SYNAR, the new T21 law and issues with enforcement.

We welcome **Roberta Keller** from Alexis Advisors who has a presentation to share with us about socially responsible investing.

**Marge White** informed us the Va Foundation for Health Youth has gone live with their Behind the Haze Campaign related to e-cigs vaping. The campaign will run for 6 weeks on traditional and social/digital media. The Y-Street Youth are working on Share The Air, a statewide tobacco free parks and recreation spaces effort. The Reduce Tobacco Use Conference is coming April 20-22 in Alexandria. A call for abstracts for both Reduce Tobacco Use and the Reduce Obesity post-conference will be going out soon.

**Avis Thomas**, Free From Tobacco Coordinator with VDH at Richmond City Health District shared the cessation program will have free NRT's for participants coming up. Richmond's Peer Coach Cessation Program is on the verge of seeing its first participants.

**Rita Miller** shared that on Aug 18 the VDH Tobacco Control team launched their Quit and Stay Quit Mondays campaign, an initiative for about 40 companies with 250+ employees around the state to consider going tobacco free that will run until the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of November.

**Marge White** updated the group on VFHY's progress regarding the bill from this past GA that required the Foundation provide education about tobacco products/e-cigarettes. The educational curriculum is prepared and posted on the DOE HealthSmart portal along with a Spanish interpretation. VFHY is building their own website to house all these resources. Anyone interested in obtaining copies of any of their tools for schools or communities may contact them.

#### WEBSITE UPDATE:

**Will Hockaday** showed the group the revised and refined website ([tobaccofreeallianceva.org](http://tobaccofreeallianceva.org)) where TFAV can now share blog posts, updates, news, downloads, advertise our member organizations, and much more. *Connect with us on social media through the Follow Us link provided in the header.*

#### SMOKEFREE AMUSEMENT PARK UPDATE:

**Colleen Hughes** informed us she reached out to the folks at Disney with questions regarding their motivation and decision to make their parks tobacco free. Though no true response was provided they did refer her to a blog that provides park updates. Colleen observed the comments were nearly unanimously positive though there were outliers who were not pleased with Disney's decision. One comment allowed Disney to clarify that the new rules do include vaping. Overall no backlash from the new rules was detected. We at TFAV would like to continue to work to bring this to motivate our local theme parks, Kings Dominion and Busch Gardens to follow the path set by Disney and make their parks tobacco free. We would like to engage the Y-Street youth in this effort. We decided to create an **ad hoc Smokefree Theme Parks Committee** to formulate a uniform approach to this matter.

#### DATA UPDATES:

**Carolyn Halbert** has been in touch with Counter Tools and some of the other states interested in evaluating the effectiveness of T21. They will be coming out with regional infographs for all 5 Virginia regions and will make these and other resources available on the VDH and TFAV websites once complete.

#### PRESENTATION: TOBACCO FREE INVESTING

**Roberta Keller** joined us from Alexis Advisors to educate the group on socially responsible investing, declaring advising the importance of being cognizant of your investments because - *you vote with your money*. An Exchange-Traded Fund (ETF) will be easier than a mutual fund to analyze to learn whether or not you are inadvertently investing in the tobacco industry or a tobacco-related company. It can become quite difficult when you are not merely analyzing the probably of your financial returns but also the social impact of your investment. We should all have a voice in your investment selection. She suggested looking for a stock bundle with a positive Environmental Social Governance (ESG) rating which assesses environmental policies, social suppliers, practices, impacts, governance, executive pay, shareholder rights, internal control, and more. Five globes is the highest most socially responsible rating. She warned us to avoid any transactions or purchases with high fees saying you don't need any fees above around 0.5%. Roberta asked if anyone has thought about holding Altria stocks just so they can go to investor meetings. Since Altria is here in Richmond a person who buys stock in Altria can go to their shareholder resolution meetings and have a voice.

#### POLICY/LEGISLATION UPDATES:

**Chelsi Bennett** informed us Amy Barkley (CTFK, TFAV) will be moving to Washington DC to help lead Bloomberg's End of Vaping Campaign. The AHA's agenda regarding retail licensing would include vape shops and any other type of nicotine retailer. **Colleen Hughes** mentioned that data from the most recent

year showed ~70% increase in non-compliance, the result of going just one year without regular compliance checks or enforcement. Virginia risks losing \$1.7M in funds should rates continue to rise.

Chelsi has continued to work with Delegate Hope, Dep Sec Berger and other influential persons from multiple agencies to promote a comprehensive Tobacco Package that would include improvements to Virginia's T21 law, increase tobacco taxes, and establish retail licensing amongst other improvements to the Virginia code. The recent flavor ban imposed by the Governor of Michigan was discussed. We fully support this idea and will promote it through education when speaking with policy makers but will not include it officially into this year's proposal i.e. the "Tobacco Package". Flavors are unable to be pursued at the local level due to preemption. New York state has also recently enacted a temporary ban on tobacco flavors.

#### RICHMOND CITY TOBACCO CESSATION PEER COUNSELOR PROGRAM UPDATE:

**Avis Thomas** shared that the Free From Tobacco program has an active position available to work as a cessation peer counselor with Richmond City Health District. The program is on the verge of seeing its first participants. The program is through its soft start which involves a free NTRT program provided at the resource centers. **Sarah Birckhead** shared that Richmond was one of the last of the largest cities to have a cigarette tax and Richmond City Council wanted to provide help to the residents who would be affected by the new tax. Their goal is to engage the communities in a competent culturally-based cessation program and are hiring people from the communities where they live to assist their peers in quitting. Once the program is more off the ground they will be looking for referral sites who can recommend the program to their patients/patrons.