



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Youth Kicking Tobacco's Butt Advocates of the Year Winners Named Fame & Shame Awards expose Big Tobacco's influence in Hollywood**

ALBUQUERQUE—New Mexico Voices for Children announced today the winners of the Youth Kicking Tobacco's Butt Advocate of the Year contest at the Fifth Annual Fame & Shame Awards held at Albuquerque's KiMo Theatre on Friday, May 8. The awards honor those New Mexico middle and high school students who have demonstrated leadership in educating and mobilizing their peers about the dangers of tobacco use.

The winners received their awards at the Fifth Annual Fame & Shame Awards, a "mock Oscars" ceremony, designed to expose Big Tobacco's influence in Hollywood. The Fame & Shame awards recognize popular actors and movies that have been nominated by the young activists for their negative tobacco influences on youth.

The impact of smoking by movie stars on youth is huge. According to research, smoking in the movies is the most powerful pro-tobacco influence on kids today, accounting for 52 percent of adolescents who start smoking, an effect even stronger than cigarette advertising.

In the High School category, Amber Encinias, a senior at Raton High School, won the First Place Award. In the Middle School category, Kyle Lease, an eighth grader at Tucumcari Middle School, won the First Place Award.

Ms. Encinias has been active in Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT) as a peer educator for four years, during which time she developed, recruited and implemented a youth disparity coalition with students who have disabilities. She advocated for policy change in her school to include an alternative to its suspension policy, the Tobacco Education Group, to a student's first violation of the tobacco policy. She also implemented tobacco educational sessions and presentations to 400 youth at a peer conference in Raton. Ms. Encinias served as Executive Treasurer of her student senate, and as an officer of the Raton High School dance team. She's headed to college in the fall, but will remain on the SWAT board and intends to be involved with university groups that encourage tobacco education.

Mr. Lease has been a member of the Quay County Alcohol Substance Abuse Prevention (ASAP) Coalition – Too Smart-To Smoke Task Force since 2005, this year serving as President. He has helped organize and initiate activities like the Through with Chew Week, the Great American Smoke Out, the Great American Spit Out, the Red Ribbon Campaign,

and the Quay County Wellness Fair. He has taken the lead in recording anti-tobacco and other local health organizations' public service announcements for a local radio station, and attended the Youth Empowerment Advocacy Heroes (YEAH!) legislative retreat for the past five years.

In the High School category, Natalie Chiha, a senior at Farmington High School took the Second Place Award; Jennifer Campos, a junior at Texico High School in Texico and Juanita Saiz, a sophomore at Santa Rosa High School in Santa Rosa, tied for the Third Place Award.

In the Middle School category, Lucero Montez, an eighth grader at Belen Middle School in Belen, took the Second Place Award. Ms. Montez won the Third Place Award in this category last year.

The Youth Kicking Tobacco's Butt Advocate of the Year contest and the Fame & Shame Awards are coordinated and presented by Youth Link, a program of New Mexico Voices for Children, and The New Mexico Media Literacy Project, with funding and support from the New Mexico Department of Health's Tobacco Use Prevention and Control (TUPAC) Program.

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New Mexico Voices for Children is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization advocating for policies to improve the health and well-being of New Mexico's children, families and communities.  
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