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## News Release

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### **STAND Youth Conference Highlights Statewide Tobacco Prevention Efforts**

*Three-day conference features nationally known tobacco prevention experts*

(Phoenix) – Students Taking a New Direction (STAND), Arizona’s anti-smoking youth coalition will hold its sixth annual conference June 11 to 13 at the Wigwam Resort, 300 E Wigwam Blvd, Litchfield Park, AZ. STAND, a state-wide youth coalition coordinated by the Arizona Department of Health Services, includes 28 chapters from around the state.

For the sixth year, STAND members will attend the conference to celebrate their efforts for the year, and to learn about new ways to combat tobacco. STAND members, who range in age from 12 to 18 years old, will also learn how to improve their leadership skills, learn how to work as an effective team, and discover effective communication strategies.

“Using tobacco can cause cancer, increase your risk for heart disease and decrease the quality of your overall health. I am very proud of all of our STAND members for not only making a choice to not use tobacco, but also for helping to educate their communities about the benefits of living a tobacco-free life.” said Dr. Cara Christ, director of the Arizona Department of Health Services.

During the three-day conference STAND members will attend sessions to learn about tobacco industry tactics, community advocacy, public speaking, and get hands on experience with video production and photography. Participants will also hear from nationally known anti-tobacco speakers, La Tanisha Wright, and Samuel Allen.

Wright, a former tobacco trade retail manager, was responsible for building and maintaining relationships with tobacco retailers in the Detroit area. She witnessed firsthand how the industry targets youth and minorities and now speaks out nationally against the deceptive tactics of the industry. Allen designed the now infamous and internationally recognized “truth” brand and subsequent campaigns, which is still considered by many experts as the most effective social change campaign in the last three decades.

“STAND coalitions have an immediate and lasting public health impact in our communities,” Dr. Christ said. “We now have smoke free parks in many counties thanks to the work of the STAND coalitions. I thank each of the coalitions and all the members for their dedication and hard work in tobacco prevention.”

Over the last six years STAND coalitions have advocated and helped enact public health policies for smoke free parks and public areas in Cochise, Gila, Graham, Greenlee, La Paz, Pima, Maricopa, Mohave, Yavapai, and Yuma Counties. To learn more about STAND visit [www.standaz.com](http://www.standaz.com).

The conference will also include an awards gala to acknowledge youth and coalition groups who have gone above and beyond the call of duty and have contributed to the growing success of STAND from the past year. Phoenix Mayor Greg Stanton and Vice Mayor Valenzuela are scheduled to present.

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