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## Teen snuffs tobacco use

By KELLY HINCHCLIFFE : The Herald-Sun

Chanelle Henderson coughed the first time she smoked a cigarette.

Her high school friends convinced her to try it. But even a burning sensation in her throat could not convince her to stop. One quick hit turned into a daily habit she couldn't kick.

Four months later, Henderson encountered something more powerful than peer pressure. While surfing the Internet, she came across a picture of a person with rotten, tar-stained teeth. Her friend, Chad Bullock, had posted it and other pictures like it on his Web site to convince teens to stop smoking -- or better yet, to never start.

"I saw the pictures of teeth. I said, 'Oh, I gotta quit,'" Henderson said. "[Bullock's] the one that really inspired me to stop."

Now, almost a month later, Henderson is smoke-free and grateful for her friend's support. But she isn't the only one who noticed Bullock's tobacco-free cause.

Bullock recently was named the South Regional Youth Advocate of the Year by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids -- a national organization that strives to change public attitudes and public policies about tobacco use.

He was honored at a May gala in Washington, along with other regional, national and international winners.

More than 400 public health, political, civic and business leaders attended to recognize Bullock and the others, who each received educational scholarships and grants to continue their prevention efforts and an invitation to serve as ambassadors for the campaign.

N.C. Lt. Gov. Beverly Perdue and state Senators Robert Atwater and Jeanne Lucas also honored Bullock in a separate ceremony in Raleigh to congratulate him for being the first winner from the state to receive the national award.

"I'm proud to have Chad as one of our leaders in North Carolina's teen tobacco prevention efforts," Perdue said. "He sets a high example for others to follow."

Now a senior at Middle College High School at Durham Technical Community College, Bullock is continuing his effort to curb tobacco use around Durham, the state and the nation. Most recently, he worked with the Durham Bulls management to help lead efforts for the stadium to go smoke-free.

Bullock also led a project opposing Brown & Williamson's Kool Mixx marketing campaign, which used hip-hop images and music to market cigarettes.

He collaborated with the National African American Tobacco Prevention Network and worked with other youth advocates to collect examples of Kool advertisements and promotions, documenting possible tobacco settlement violations.

He wrote a letter to state Attorney General Roy Cooper and helped to spark the joint effort between state attorneys general and advocates that brought an end to the Kool Mixx campaign, according to the N.C. Health and Wellness Trust Fund.

Earlier this month, Bullock and staffers from an organization he works with, called Question Why Youth Empowerment, went to several Durham convenience stores to help clerks learn how to read drivers' licenses and decipher whether a person is old enough to buy tobacco.

Aidil Collins, a field coordinator for Question Why, is Bullock's adviser.

"Chad is modest," she said. "[But] he has the spirit of not being intimidated by any organization or title."

Bullock is trying to prove that by developing an outreach project with Golden Corral restaurants to encourage the entire chain to go smoke-free. He also hopes to start a smoke-free campus policy at Durham Tech.

At 17, Bullock can spout off numerous facts and figures on tobacco use. But it doesn't come from personal

experience. He proudly admits he has never tried tobacco -- the very product he is fighting.

"I've gotten headaches from secondhand smoke. That's as close as I've come," he said. "I don't think I need to smoke a cigarette to go out and make a change."

But secondhand smoke is how Bullock got his start in the tobacco-free business. As a child, he had family members who smoked.

"I didn't know a lot about it, but I knew it wasn't healthy," he said. "I'm still working on my family. I'm constantly sharing facts. They know it's hurting them. They're just addicted to it."

Working on his family is still an ongoing battle, but peer-to-peer intervention seems to be going a little better.

Besides Henderson, Bullock said he has convinced at least one other teen to quit smoking.

"My friend smoked. I'd see him outside after school. I'd share what I do," Bullock said. "It was peer-to-peer. He was already trying to cut back. He needed that push."

Henderson needed the same push, she said. While her cigarette habit has disappeared, her desire to smoke has not.

"I wanna hit it, but I don't," she said.

Peer pressure was hard to overcome, but Henderson said she is happy she fought back.

"People said, 'That's so cool,' but it's not," she said. "I'm glad I stopped smoking. [Bullock] really has inspired me to stop."

To Bullock, that's one of the best compliments he can receive.

"It meant so much. It meant I made a difference in someone's life," he said.

He now has his sights set on attending college in New York City. He hasn't picked a major, but he plans to keep working with tobacco prevention.

His award from the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids is just a launching pad for his career, he said.

"[The award] put a spotlight on what we're doing in North Carolina. I'm proud the work got recognized," Bullock said. "I'm part of a change happening in North Carolina."