

## Naples Daily News

# New group forms to combat tobacco usage in Lee County

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The Lee County Health Department is launching a new coalition, Tobacco-Free Lee, to bring students, adults, business and faith leaders together to cut tobacco usage rates in the community.

The new initiative is in response to the alarming rate of smokers in Lee, which stands at 20-percent among adults and 14 percent among pregnant women. The founding members are representatives from the health department, Lee Memorial Health System, Lee County School Board and Family Health Centers and others.

The health department was recently awarded with \$600,000 from the state to address tobacco-related issues and will use the money to target groups who are vulnerable to start smoking, said Brenden Donohue, a tobacco specialist with the health department.

In Lee, 22.6 percent of women smoke versus 16.4 percent among men. About 5.7 percent of middle-school students reported smoking in the last 30 days and 18.4 percent of high-school students reported smoking in the last 30 days. The statewide average is 5 percent among middle-school students and 14.5 percent among high-school students