UNSETTLED SMOKE

Once thought to be a nicotine cure, vaping has become its own epidemic.
Home is where the health is.

Providing world-class healthcare to small town living.

Kaweah Delta Rural Health Clinics give people who live in the rural areas of Tulare County better access to exceptional health care in the communities where they live, work, and play.

With clinics close to home offering convenient health services for the young and the young at heart, families can see a primary care physician, and often a specialist, just miles from their doorstep. Regular doctor visits help people get the preventative care they need to stay healthy year round.
2 Linking resolutions to routines is a good habit to have
Habit linking, or connecting new practices with established routines, could be the trick you need to finally keep your New Year’s resolutions.

4 New state law has working mothers pumped for privacy
SB 142, which took effect on Jan. 1, require employers to provide a private space close to their workstation where mother’s can pump breastmilk for their child.

6 FHCN in Woodlake welcomes doctor who gets cultural references
Family HealthCare Network welcomes bilingual, bicultural Lilibeth Martinez, PsyD, to its provider team at the Woodlake Health Center.

8 New monitoring unit ensures epilepsy patients stay secure
Valley Children’s Hospital opens new inpatient unit for epilepsy monitoring as part of the only Level 4 Epilepsy Center in the Valley and one of only five throughout California.

11 Tulare County cities take issue with unsettling smoke
After decades of declines in underage tobacco use, flavored vape juice is fueling a resurgence in teen smoking and a vaping related epidemic.

14 Kaweah Delta facility helps patients achieve the best of health
U.S. News & World Report names Kaweah Delta’s Skilled Nursing Program a Best Nursing Home in its 2019-2020 rankings; puts facility in the top 20% in the nation.

16 Nutritionists: Diabetics should take advice with a grain of salt
Nutritionists debunk food myths that sea salt, brown eggs and traditional sugar are healthier than table salt, white eggs and high-fructose corn syrup for diabetics.
We’ve all gone through the cycle: we wake up on January 1 with the best of intentions. But by Valentine’s Day, we’ve nearly forgotten the goals we set for the new year. Not this year. Habit-linking could be the trick you need to finally keep your New Year’s resolutions and build good habits that last.

**BUILD ON THE HABITS YOU ALREADY HAVE**

Habit-linking, also known as habit stacking, is the practice of connecting a new goal to an already ingrained pattern. For example, you probably built the habit many years ago to brush your teeth before going to bed. If your New Year’s resolution is to exercise more, link exercise to your nightly teeth-brushing. To start the habit, before you brush your teeth, perform 20 push-ups.

Over time, practicing push-ups before bed will become a new habit. You may add in squats and sit-ups. Eventually, exercising regularly will be a new habit, and you won’t need to use brushing your teeth as a reminder anymore.

**WHAT DOES THE SCIENCE SAY?**

Several years ago, researchers began comparing the brains of newborns to adult brains. They found that adult brains had 41% fewer neurons than those of babies. Even though adults have more skills than newborns, their neurons are fewer due to a process called synaptic pruning.

Essentially, as we get older, our brain gets rid of neuron connections that aren’t being used and solidifies ones that are. For example, if you take piano lessons for 12 years, your brain strengthens those neural pathways. Alternatively, if you take a foreign language class in high school but never practice that language afterward, your mind will prune out those unused connections.

**HOW CAN I GET STARTED?**

Think about what habits you already have. Besides brushing your teeth, some examples could include making your bed, brewing your morning coffee, showering, opening the curtains in your bedroom, taking a lunch break or getting into bed.

Next, think about which goals you want to link to existing routines. Write these down as affirmations.

For example:
- Before I make the bed, I will journal for five minutes.
- After I start my coffee brewing, I will write a list of three things I’m grateful for.
- Before I step in the shower, I will do 20 push-ups.
- After I brush my teeth, I will floss my teeth.
- Before I get into bed, I will stretch for 10 minutes.

**SMALL CHANGES ADD UP**

Don’t worry about making big changes all at once. Habit-linking works by training your brain to make small tweaks to your daily routine. Over time, you can scale these habits to incorporate bigger lifestyle changes. Before you know it, your daily routine will be full of healthy habits that are just as instinctive as brushing your teeth.
Optometrists say employers should have a healthy Vision for 2020

American Optometric Association invites all employers to join the 2020 Employer Pledge and drive awareness of the importance of annual, comprehensive eye exams.

As part of the American Optometric Association’s (AOA) #2020EyeExam initiative, the organization and doctors of optometry nationwide are calling upon visionary companies across the country to join the 2020 Employer Pledge program - affirming the importance of caring for the overall health and well-being of employees and their families by reminding them of the importance of an annual comprehensive eye exam.

"Comprehensive eye exams are one of the most important, preventive ways to preserve vision and overall health," says AOA President Barbara L. Horn, O.D. "We have engaged more than 30 employers to join our pledge. Through them, we will reach more than 300,000 employees with the message that it’s more important than ever to ensure a comprehensive eye exam with an AOA doctor of optometry is part of their routine, primary health care. We are encouraging all employers to join in this movement and make 2020 the year of the eye exam."

The AOA’s American Eye-Q consumer survey revealed many respondents were not aware of how vision impacts overall health. Only 53 percent visit an eye health professional at least once a year and one-third of those surveyed lacked an understanding of how to take care of their eyes and vision.

Eye health and vision problems may develop without any obvious signs or symptoms. In-person, annual eye exams with a doctor of optometry can detect early signs of visual system diseases such as glaucoma, a leading cause of blindness. In addition, eye exams safeguard overall health by enabling the doctor of optometry to detect more than 270 serious health conditions including diabetes, high blood pressure, autoimmune diseases and cancers.

As with many systemic diseases, most eye diseases, if detected early, can be treated before detrimental effects to health and vision take place. If a problem is detected, doctors of optometry can help patients and their families navigate the right prevention plans or the next steps in official diagnosis and treatment.

Employers are the gatekeepers to health care for 49 percent of Americans and have a vested interest in ensuring their health and wellness. Through AOA’s #2020EyeExam Pledge, employers large and small have the opportunity to uphold the eye health of their employees and promote high-value care by fostering awareness and encouraging everyone to get their annual, in-person comprehensive eye exam with an AOA family doctor of optometry.

Participating organizations will also be highlighted through a year-long communications program reaching the public and AOA’s more than 44,000 doctors of optometry, optometric professionals and students.

For more information on the #2020EyeExam initiative or to take the pledge, please visit AOA.org/2020EmployerPledge.
New state law has working mothers
Pumped for Privacy

SB 142, which took effect on Jan. 1, require employers to provide a private space close to their workstation where mother's can pump breastmilk for their child.

Katie Woody's firstborn, Oliver, struggled from birth to latch onto her breast, so she had little choice but to pump her milk and feed it to him from a bottle. After a three-month maternity leave, Woody returned to her job as a sous-chef for a meal delivery service in Los Angeles, expecting to have access to the sole office in the rented building to pump her breast milk — an agreement she had made with the building manager. But a male shift supervisor who occupied the office would not let her use it. Instead, she pumped in her car, covering the windows as best she could. “But the stress of the situation was too much,” she said, so she stopped giving her son breast milk a few months after her return to work. That upset her, because Oliver, now 2, had health problems, and she wanted to give him the best nutrition possible.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends children be exclusively breastfed for the first six months of their lives. But, as in Woody's case, many mothers return to work well before that and often have trouble finding a suitable place to pump and store their breast milk.

A law signed last year by Gov. Gavin Newsom, which took effect Jan. 1, seeks to rectify that problem. It requires that working mothers be given a more dignified space to pump and proper equipment for storing the milk.

Authored by Sen. Scott Wiener (D-San Francisco), Senate Bill 142 requires employers to provide mothers a secure and private space close to their workstation with a chair and a table or shelf to hold their pumping equipment, as well as access to electricity. Running water and a refrigerator or cooler for their milk must be located close to their workstations.

“Too many new mothers are unable to express milk at work or are forced to do so in a restroom or other unsuitable space,” Wiener said in a statement. The lack of a proper lactation space, research shows, is particularly pronounced among lower-income workers and women of color.

The new law requires employers to notify employees of their right to pump their breast milk at work, including the time and space provided for it — and it mandates that any violations of those rights be communicated to the California Labor Commissioner's Office.

The Affordable Care Act requires employers across the U.S. to give women time and a space — other than a bathroom — to pump their breast milk. But it does not mandate specifics.

SB-142 is not Wiener's first attempt to beef up workplace lactation requirements in California. Last year, he authored a similar bill, but then-Gov. Jerry Brown vetoed it. Brown did sign AB-1976, which lacked the specific requirements contained in the Wiener bill.

In 2017, San Francisco passed a first-in-the-nation ordinance on workplace lactation, to which SB-142 bears a close resemblance.

Arissa Palmer, executive director of Breastfeed LA — one of many breastfeeding rights groups that supported the new state law — said it provides "minimum standards" for safe and clean lactation spaces across California. That's important, she said, because employers around the state have varying ideas about what such spaces should look like.

Failure to conform to the new specifications will open employers to fines and further liability, Palmer said, adding: “The law that protects a woman from retaliation is extremely important.”

One Friday this month, Palmer said, she fielded complaints from women who had been harassed about their pumping breaks. One was fired, and another quit her job.

On the other hand, Palmer said, many employers are empathetic and want to accommodate new mothers — but limited space can make it hard for small businesses operating on thin margins to do so.
The new law exempts businesses with fewer than 50 employees that can prove accommodating lactating mothers would create an undue hardship.

One solution for employers with limited space is free-standing, portable lactation rooms. Palmer cited the case of a fieldworker whose employers provided her a pod, with portable electricity, manufactured by Mamava, a Burlington, Vt., company that designs lactation spaces for airports and workplaces.

Sascha Mayer, Mamava’s CEO, said she came up with the idea for her company while working as an executive in a design studio. She said she was able to have privacy simply by closing the door to her office, “but so many women I’ve met don’t have that privilege.”

Lactation laws vary around the country, but even with minimum federal standards, Mayer said, “millions of employers are probably out of compliance.”

Opponents of the new California law — including statewide associations representing retailers, restaurants and health care providers — argued before its passage that it would be “quite burdensome for employers” and expose them to “potential litigation traps.” They said AB-1976 already had required costly changes regarding lactation.

Proponents of the new law cite research from the U.S. Breastfeeding Committee showing that more than half of mothers return to the workforce before their children are 1 year old. In California, half of mothers work during pregnancy, and most of them say they plan to return to work while they are still breastfeeding, according to the state’s Center for Family Health (CFH).

And barriers at work, the proponents say, can cause those women to stop breastfeeding before their child is 6 months old.

Data from the California Department of Public Health shows a large disparity in access to breastfeeding support among California’s working mothers, breaking down along racial, ethnic and economic lines.

Wealthier white women reported receiving the most lactation support from their employers, while black and Latina mothers reported the least support. And women at or below the poverty line were far less likely than others to work for employers who accommodated their lactation needs.

Still, the CFH reports that since 2011 the percentage of all women who reported receiving workplace breastfeeding support increased from just over half to two-thirds.

Carissa Rosenthal, 32, recently returned to her job in public relations after giving birth to a baby boy 3½ months ago.

“Her co-working office in San Diego has a ‘mothers’ lounge’ with a door that locks, a comfortable chair, a shelf, a lamp, a fridge and a sink down the hall in the kitchen, she said.

“It’s definitely a perk and a selling point for a shared office. I definitely feel it’s an important thing for it to be comfortable, and not just stuffed into a janitor’s closet.”

CARISSA ROSENTHAL
a working mother in San Diego

When Katie Woody had her first child, Oliver, she was forced to pump breastmilk in her car after returning to work because a male supervisor would not allow her to use his office. Unable to pump exposed in her car, Woody switched to formula and her son, now 2, developed health problems.
Paper Trail Podcast

with Paul Myers and Reggie Ellis

This is what we do when the week’s newspaper is set, edited and running on the press. Pour yourself some coffee, put up your weary feet, and listen in.

Available at your favorite podcast supplier.

The Paper Trail Podcast is an audio talk show which runs about two episodes per week with varied topics related to local and regional news. Episodes are available for free to the public through iTunes, TuneIn, Google Play and Stitcher, among other outlets. The show is hosted by The Sun-Gazette’s editor Paul Myers and publisher Reggie Ellis.

www.papertrailpod.com
Family HealthCare Network welcomes bilingual, bicultural Lilibeth Martinez, PsyD, to its provider team at the Woodlake Health Center.

When it comes to treating patients who have trouble trusting authority, there is no substitute for hiring doctors who speak their language, as well as their culture. Dr. Lilibeth Martinez, PsyD, is one of those doctors and was recently hired by Family HealthCare Network (FHCN) to provide psychological counseling at its Woodlake Health Center. Martinez received her doctor of psychology and her master of arts in clinical forensic psychology from Alliant International in 2015 and 2014, respectively. Martinez has spent her professional and academic life in California and has worked in both Porterville and Fresno. Knowing the communities served by FHCN and speaking both English and Spanish make Martinez a sought-after provider within the network.

According to the American Psychiatric Association (APA), having a mental illness or even receiving counseling can be stigmatizing for Latinos. Poor access to care due to low rates of insurance, immigration status, language and cultural barriers in healthcare which can include differences between provider-patient in explanatory models of illness and families as the gatekeepers can limit entry into treatment. Availability of specialized mental health services or comparable integrated behavioral treatment within primary care could improve treatment access and retention.

Providers like Martinez understand there are several cultural differences between white and Latino patients that allow them to understand these patients more empathetically. For example, while both cultures can be deeply spiritual, Latinos are more likely to emphasize supernatural forces, such as saints as intermediaries. While white families tend to be centered around just their immediate family, Latinos also regard their extended family as being extremely close. Whereas white patients may want more direct communications with specific steps and benchmarks, Latinos are more likely to want a more informal dialogue and appreciate examples and stories of what others have gone through in similar situations.

Martinez is accepting patients at FHCN’s Woodlake Health Center, located at 201 E. Lakeview Ave. To schedule an appointment with Family HealthCare Network, please contact 1-877-960-3426 (FHCN) or visit www.fhcn.org for more information. The Woodlake Health Center medical hours are Monday through Friday 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Saturday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
New monitoring unit ensures epilepsy patients Stay Secure

Valley Children’s Hospital opens new inpatient unit for epilepsy monitoring as part of the only Level 4 Epilepsy Center in the Valley and one of only five throughout California.

Valley Children’s Hospital unveiled its new Epilepsy Monitoring Unit (EMU) earlier this month. This new facility, located in the Voyager Unit of the Madera hospital, is a designated area for epilepsy patients who need to be monitored over longer periods of time.

This unit includes six rooms with hard-wired beds, nine portable machines and a play area. There are also video cameras in each room and throughout the hallways, allowing patients more freedom to roam while still being monitored over multiple consecutive days and ensuring no data is lost. This facility creates a more comfortable environment, conducive to optimal seizure monitoring.

“When patients have to be monitored over several days in our Epilepsy Monitoring Unit, it can be stressful on both the patient and the families,” Dr. Cesar Santos, medical director of neurosciences, said. “With this new facility, patients and families will be next door to others experiencing the same problems, creating a community for each other.”

The EMU is part of Valley Children’s level 4 Epilepsy Center, which provides fully comprehensive services from epilepsy monitoring to the most innovative surgical options. This prestigious accreditation makes Valley Children’s one of only five level 4 epilepsy centers in California offering comprehensive care specifically to pediatric patients with epilepsy. Last year, the Neuroscience team used top of the line technology and performed cutting edge procedures to perform life altering advancements for epilepsy patients; this includes performing a hemispherectomy, a surgery disconnecting one half of the brain from the other, and usage of Rosa, a robotic arm used for minimally invasive brain and spine surgery.

“The level 4 designation shows we are providing the most advanced, state of the art medical therapies and surgical treatments for those patients with epilepsy,” Dr. Patricia Clerkin, Valley Children’s medical director of neurosurgery, said. “We will deliver the highest level of care to our community.”

According to the National Association of Epilepsy Centers, level 4 epilepsy centers have the professional expertise and facilities to provide the highest level medical and surgical evaluation and treatment for patients with complex epilepsy. These advancements show no signs of slowing down as Valley Children’s prepares for surgeries using new laser ablation technology.

Currently there are approximately 12,000 children living with epilepsy in the Central Valley. While one-third of these cases are not controllable with medication, technology at Valley Children’s such as surgical robots and laser ablation provide advanced and innovative options for patients. For more information, please visit www.valleychildrens.org.
Kaweah Delta’s new year’s resolution was to provide better care for its most vulnerable populations – those who are new to the area and without a primary physician, covered by Medi-Cal or uninsured. And just two days into the new year, Kaweah Delta opened its new Sequoia Health and Wellness Center (SHWC) in the former Family Medicine Center, located just north of Kaweah Delta Medical Center at 202 W. Willow Ave., Suite 502, in Visalia. A grand opening and ribbon cutting for the center was held on Jan. 14.

The Sequoia Health and Wellness Center (SHWC) is part of the nonprofit arm of Kaweah Delta of the same name formed in April 2019. Under its new structure, SHWC will continue to provide a variety of health care services (primary care, women’s health, prenatal care, pediatrics, etc.) to people no matter who they are, where they live and regardless of income, insurance or ability to pay. However, unlike Kaweah Delta’s other primary and specialty clinics, the center will be applying to become a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC). As an FQHC, the facility would have access to benefits that current Kaweah Delta clinics do not, such as the ability to employ physicians, sponsor visas for foreign graduates, offer federal loan forgiveness for physicians, receive federal and state grants and receive a higher rate of reimbursement for residents insured by Medi-Cal and Medicare.

Ryan Gates, PharmD, Sequoia Health and Wellness Center’s chief executive officer, who also serves as director of population health management at Kaweah Delta, said the move will enable SHWC to access state and federal programs and funding sources that will help it expand and improve care for patients and attract more physicians and providers to Tulare County. SHWC has already added new positions to expand its services as a result of its effort to become a FQHC. Those positions include a community outreach specialist, psychologist and social worker, health promotion instructor, referral specialist and a clinical pharmacist. In the future, Gates said additional services could include chiropractic and dental care.

“This is an exciting moment. From the very beginning we’ve known this is the right thing to do for our patients, our physicians and our community,” Gates said. “Our community wants and deserves outstanding health outcomes and needs greater access to physicians. Alongside our community partners, Sequoia Health and Wellness Centers will play an important role in helping us achieve both.”

Last April, Kaweah Delta applied for the former Family Medicine Clinic as well as its Urgent Care on Court Street to be FQHC “new access points” with the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services which oversees health care to medically underserved and vulnerable populations. Gates said Kaweah Delta’s application was not among the five awarded in California.

Kaweah Delta now plans to apply for the former Family Medicine Clinic to be a “look alike” FQHC. The designation would provide Kaweah Delta with many of the benefits of being an FQHC, such as the ability to employ physicians directly and student loan forgiveness and foreign visa programs, but would not come with the $655,000 grant to operate annually nor cost-based reimbursements, where centers can be reimbursed for the entire appointment instead of a flat fee that may not cover the cost of providing care to patients.

Gary Herbst told The Sun-Gazette last spring that one of the major hurdles
for Kaweah Delta is its inability to employ doctors. California is one of five states prohibiting hospitals from employing doctors. The ban against the corporate practice of medicine (CPM) dates back to the 1930s when there was a growing concern over hospital administrators overriding physician decisions about patient care based on cost. The idea was that keeping doctors independent of hospitals would result in better patient practices.

The California Supreme Court in 1932 determined that it is impossible to separate the regulated practice of care from the business practice because “either one may extend into the domain of the other,” according to a report by California Health and Human Services Agency. The report also cites a 1938 decision that letting a corporation hire and control physicians would lead to “divided loyalty and impaired confidence” between the interests of the corporation and the patient’s needs. The only exceptions to the rule in California are hospitals operated by the University of California, such as UCLA and UC San Francisco.

Now that the Sequoia Health and Wellness Center is operational, Gates said the nonprofit entity SHWC submitted its application to be an FQHC look alike on Jan. 17. HRSA will then plan an onsite visit in the late spring and provide SHWC 90 days to correct any issues it may have as a nonprofit clinic. The earliest SHWC could obtain an FQHC designation would be in July. Once approved, the nonprofit would then apply with the California Department of Health Care Services for the higher rate of reimbursement, which is often 33% higher than typical reimbursements for Medicare patients at public and private clinics.

Through the FQHC co-applicant model available to public entities, Kaweah Delta Health Care District will continue to own and operate the center, but it will be governed by SHWC’s 11-member board of directors, of which at least 51 percent are patients of the Center. Kaweah Delta would also not be the first public hospital district to journey into FQHCs. In 2013, Hi-Desert Medical Center applied to create a nonprofit arm to operate federally funded clinics and was awarded FQHC status.

Kaweah Delta is a publicly-owned community health care organization that provides comprehensive health services to the greater Visalia region and Tulare County. With over 5,000 dedicated medical professionals and employees, Kaweah Delta is committed to meeting the community’s health needs through state-of-the-art medicine, high-quality preventive services and specialized health centers and clinics. For more information, visit www.kaweahdelta.org.

“Our community wants and deserves outstanding health outcomes and needs greater access to physicians. Alongside our community partners, Sequoia Health and Wellness Centers will play an important role in helping us achieve both.”

RYAN GATES, PHARMD
SEQUOIA HEALTH AND WELLNESS CENTER’S CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
After decades of declines in underage tobacco use, flavored vape juice is fueling a resurgence in teen smoking; cities consider bans to deal with vaping related epidemic.

Tulare County cities take issue with Unsettling Smoke

When Sara Morton became an educator 20 years ago, underage cigarette use was at an all-time low. Kids who had grown up watching well-funded anti-smoking commercials on television seemed to have gotten the message. During her first few years as assistant principal at Tulare Western High School, Morton said she never heard any talk about tobacco use and rarely caught kids lighting up the old cliché of smoking in the bathroom.

Three years ago, things started to change. During that time, Morton said she has seen a steady increase of underage vaping, although it can’t be proven because tobacco doesn’t smell like sour leaf anymore. Instead, it smells like bubblegum, cotton candy, strawberries and churros.

“There’s no more yucky smell,” she said. “What can you do when a kid has a strong odor of bubble gum?,” Morton said.

Even the devices are deceiving. Vape pens get their name from resembling an ink pen. Others look like portable USB drives, phone chargers or lipstick.

“None of this stuff sets off any red flags, so it’s hard to know if a student is using tobacco,” Morton said.

Morton says they are rarely able to catch kids in the act on campus, but that other students have come to administrators with concerns about their friends’ vaping habits. Educators know that vaping is not healthy, even though it may be less harmful than cigarettes.

Vape juice is essentially an oil that is being heated into a steam and there are 60 known chemicals used in the liquid, according to the Truth Initiative, a tobacco prevention program. They also include nicotine, the main addictive substance in cigarettes, although usually at lower levels.

“It really is scary what kids are doing to themselves,” Morton said. “They have no clue what’s in that bottle and who knows where they are buying them from.”

Morton said she isn’t sure what the right answer to the problem is, but she does know the right question to ask: If flavored vaping juice isn’t targeting children, then why is it so popular with underage users?

“I never imagined someone would reinvent cigarettes and make them more appealing to a young person,” Morton said. “I really thought teen smoking was, for the most part, a thing of the past.”

SWATTING SMOKE SHOPS

In order to clear the air on teen vaping, the Tulare City Council considered a ban on all flavored vaping products. Following two joint meetings with school district officials, the council discussed the ban at its Oct. 1 meeting.

The item was introduced to the council by Mayor Jose Sigala who noted other cities had already approved bans. The city of San Francisco banned the sale of all e-cigarettes in June despite being home to the product’s number one manufacturer Juul Labs. In July, the City Council in Livermore, Calif., a city of about 89,000 people located on the eastern edge of the Bay Area, voted to ban all flavored tobacco. Juul funded a referendum campaign to reverse the ban but withdrew it in October. The city of Los Angeles is discussing a ban on flavored tobacco, something the L.A. County Board of Supervisors approved last year.

Vice Mayor Dennis A. Mederos asked how a ban would stop people from ordering it online. Sigala countered that online purchases require a credit card and that parents can control those types of purchases.

Councilmember Carlton Jones said he understood that vaping is bad, but that it isn’t any more dangerous, and probably less so, than teenage drinking of alcohol. He said he would also like to get rid of drinks like Four Lokos, an alcoholic beverage made to look like an energy drink, but both alcohol and tobacco need to be regulated at a higher level for any locals laws to make a
Councilmember Greg Nunley disagreed with the alcohol analogy. “Anyone drinking alcohol is not being put in a coma. Just smoking this is putting people in a coma,” Nunley said.

Councilmember Terry Sayer said it wasn’t a good idea to wait around for state or federal legislation when children were being hurt now. She said cracking down on places that sell flavored tobacco to youth could at least stem the epidemic.

“There are places in Tulare where they are selling to youth,” Sayer said. “We can make it uncomfortable for them to sell it to youth. Let’s do something about those places.”

Jones was also concerned the ban may create a black market for homemade versions of vape juice that are extremely dangerous.

“The production in people’s houses, that’s where people are getting sick,” Jones said. “Anytime you say no flavored vaping, people are going to make it.”

Police Chief Wes Hensley said when it comes to flavored vape juice, it’s not just about tobacco, but also about cannabis. In August, Tulare County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSAA) issued a public health warning that vaping cannabis could increase your risk of a severe pulmonary condition, which produces flu-like symptoms and can rapidly escalate. At least three people in Tulare County have been hospitalized due to vaping unregulated cannabis or CBD oils.

Hensley said the recent rise in vaping was similar to the spike in spice use several years ago. The synthetic marijuana is a mix of herbs (shredded plant material) and man-made chemicals mixed to mimic the effects of marijuana but is frequently much stronger and more dangerous than its more natural, legal counterpart. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse for Teens, many of the chemicals used in spice have been banned by the Drug Enforcement Administration. In 2017, the mixture of chemicals resulted in overdose deaths in emergency rooms across the country.

“Did we eliminate, No. But we significantly reduced the number of places and it is not as prevalent as it was before,” Hensley said.

Hensley said his department could run operations similar to using underage decoys to attempt to purchase alcohol from liquor stores. He said it would take a lot of resources to crack down on the stores selling to minors but that it was doable.

“There is some enforcement if they yank the license,” Sigala said. “I do think our police department has an important role in doing what chief is saying. We do have a role in terms of undercover and shoulder tap [operations] that help ABC determine whether someone should be shut down.”

The council voted unanimously to have a citywide ban on flavored tobacco products brought back as an emergency ordinance but ultimately decided to delay a vote until after the federal government and state legislators had clarified their responses to the issue. Even though there is no state or federal law preventing cities from banning flavored tobacco products, vice mayor Mederos said it wasn’t a matter of if they could do it, but if they should. He said the city should regulate business conduct but should not be in the business of regulating a substance or product because it doesn’t have all of the evidence or even access to all of the evidence.

“The state and federal government will move on this issue,” Mederos said. “It’s not our place to have a kneejerk reaction. We are not prepared to have staff move forward.”

Just two days into the new year, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration made its move by saying it will begin heavily regulating flavors and that all flavors beginning in May 2020. With the exception of tobacco and menthol, all flavored e-cigarette liquid is banned until they have been preauthorized for market to ensure they are not targeting children. This would also include the design and marketing materials associated with those products.

“[T]he FDA’s enforcement priorities are not a ‘ban’ on flavored or cartridge-based ENDS. The FDA has already accepted and begun review of several premarket applications for flavored ENDS products through the pathway that Congress established in the Tobacco Control Act,” the FDA stated in the new guidelines.

Shortly after the FDA’s announcement, state legislators introduced a bill banning the sale of all flavored tobacco products, both cigarette and cigars as well as vapes, statewide. Introduced by a coalition of State senators and assembly members on Jan. 6, Senate Bill 793 bans all flavors, including mint and menthol.

LIGHTING A FIRE

Visalia also considered a citywide ban on flavored tobacco products. Three Mt. Whitney High School seniors spoke at the Oct. 7 and Nov. 18 Visalia City Council meetings asking the city to ban flavored tobacco products within the city limits. The students are part of C.A.L.I. (Collaborate. Advocate. Lead. Inspire.) youth coalition working to reduce youth tobacco use and youth vaping under the umbrella of the California Health Collaborative.

Mt. Whitney senior Kevin Linares said the group’s goal is to raise awareness around e-cigarette use and flavored tobacco products among youth and to increase the public’s knowledge about what’s been happening to our peers. “We want to encourage local leadership to take action where improvement is needed,” Linares said.

Another student, Jocelyn Resendiz, told the council that 86.4% of youth tobacco users in California reported using flavored tobacco products. She said the tobacco industry directly targets youth with their packaging and use of flavors. According to C.A.L.I., there are over 15,000 different flavors of e-juice, many of which appeal to Latino and Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations such as horchata, churros, sriracha, and bobas.

“At school, students openly talk about trading Juul pods with each other and multiple students have been caught trading,” she said. “Students also have been caught using these devices in class. They will often hide it in their sleeve or their backpack.”

Student Alexandra Acevedo said 38% of 11th graders in Visalia Unified School District reported using electronic cigarettes and other vaping devices, according to the most recent California Health Kids Survey for 2015/2016.

He also pointed out that Tulare County had its first vaping-related death just last month and that there have been many confirmed deaths nationwide, 57 as of Jan. 7, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). On Sept. 16, a Tulare County resident became the first vaping-associated death in the Central Valley. On Oct. 8, the Kings County Department of Public Health announced a local woman was the second vaping-related death in the Valley. Both cases are part of a recent spike in Kings, Fresno, and Tulare counties of individuals being admitted to hospitals with vaping-related illnesses.

“With all these cases and deaths occurring, we want to inform you on some possible solutions which include restricting the sale of flavored tobacco products near schools, parks and youth centers,” Acevedo said.

Visalia councilmember Greg Collins asked for the ban of flavored tobacco products to put on a future agenda. The item will be placed on the consent calendar where the council can vote to add it as an official item to a future meeting or deny the request with a vote.

Councilmember Phil Cox said many of the cases seem to be connected to vaping cannabis or CBD oils and are being investigated by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) in Kings County where health officials have reported nine cases since June. CDPH has identified 65 potential cases across the state among people with a recent history of vaping, some of whom vaporized unlicensed or unregulated cannabis products, beginning in late June.

Joshua French, owner of Mt. Whitney Vapor, spoke at a council meeting with Cox. He said the idea of banning e-cigarettes is an overreaction to vaping-related deaths that have been misrepresented in the media and completely ignores evidence from the CDC that most injuries
escaped improper use of vaping devices by using products containing THC, the active psychoactive ingredient in marijuana and then mixed with oils.

"Mainstream media has picked this up as a war on all vaping products," French said.

French said he takes his responsibility as a 21 and older shop seriously by displaying signs and complying with the Stop Tobacco Access to Kids Enforcement (STAKE) Program through the California Department of Public Health. He tries to hire employees who hold guard cards, certifying they can work as security guard, and said all of his adult customers like the fact that he only sells approved vaping products and does not carry any traditional tobacco products. At the Jan. 6 city council meeting, he said he would be in favor of stricter enforcement such as placing all product in lock containers or behind the counter, limiting the amount someone can purchase, more undercover sting operations and stiffer fines.

French said the proposed ordinance would force most of businesses to close and that would force adults to seek out vapes in an unsafe black market. He asked the city council to hold off on banning products that would shut down his business and allow the federal regulations to take effect.

"I'm hoping this city council views this new development as acceptable for our community versus a full-flavor ban," he said at the Jan. 6 council meeting. "I believe this new national regulation is something that can be agreed on by all parties."

RAISING QUESTIONS

The CDC issued a statement in October that it, as well as the FDA, state and local health departments were investigating a multistate outbreak of lung injury associated with vaping, referred to as e-cigarette, or vaping, product use-associated lung injury (EVALI) by the CDC, and vape associated pulmonary injury (VAPI) by others. As of Jan. 7, 2020, there have been 2,602 lung injury cases associated with the use of e-cigarette, or vaping, products have been reported to CDC from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and one U.S. territory. The CDC is recommending that people refrain from any type of e-cigarette, particularly those containing THC, don’t buy vaping products from street or pop-up vendors, and reminding everyone that there is no safe tobacco product and that they are especially harmful to youth.

"Since the specific cause or causes of lung injury are not yet known, the only way to assure that people are not at risk while the investigation continues is to consider refraining from use of all e-cigarette and vaping products," the CDC said in a released statement. "There is no safe tobacco product. All tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, carry a risk."

The CDC statement prompted the Visalia Unified School District (VUSD) to hold a community forum about vape use among teenagers at the El Diamante High School Theater on Oct. 24.

"The industry is constantly creating new ways to hide evidence of the dangers of vaping, and as a nation we are seeing tragic loss of life due to vaping," said Frank Escobar, director of student services for Visalia Unified School District. "It’s critically important that parents become more aware, know what to look for, and be prepared to address it with their child."

According to a study commissioned by Congress, teens and young adults are much more likely to become addicted to nicotine from vaping and vaping devices release toxic substances. Vape devices can look like cigarettes, cigars, pipes, USB sticks or small cell phones. Visalia Unified will hold more community presentations in February to inform parents and community members about vape-use among teenagers. The presentations, followed by questions and answers, will be held on Thursday, Feb. 13, at Goshen Elementary School, and on Wednesday, Feb. 26, at Green Acres Middle School. Both presentations will be held from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Community agencies will be on hand to provide materials and helpful resources.

"We have now seen kids vaping through the drawstrings of their hoodies," Escobar said. "The industry is very creative but the harmful impacts on our kids are very real."

The results of the CDC’s investigation were reported on Dec. 20 and found that 86% of EVALI cases used products laced with TCH, the active psychoactive ingredient in marijuana, and 96% of them included Vitamin E acetate. The few cases that did not include Vitamin E included others oils, such as coconut oil and limonene, a citrus flavoring agent used in food manufacturing.

Vitamin E is a vitamin found in many foods, including vegetable oils, cereals, meat, fruits and vegetables as well as dietary supplement and in many cosmetic products, like skin creams. It does not cause harm when ingested as a vitamin supplement or applied to the skin. However, previous research suggests when vitamin E acetate is inhaled, it may interfere with normal lung functioning.

SMOKE DETECTORS

Smaller school districts are getting involved as well. In November, Exeter Unified School District and, indirectly, Farmersville Unified School District, both received more than a quarter of a million dollars to prevent the illegal sale of tobacco products to minors. Exeter Unified School District was awarded $279,934 and the Tulare County Office of Education was awarded $384,113 in state funding to tackle the illegal sale of cigarettes, tobacco and vaping products to minors as part of the California Department of Justice’s Tobacco Grant Program. A grant totaling $30.5 million were awarded to 76 local entities throughout the state to support the enforcement of state and local laws related to the illegal sales and marketing of tobacco products to minors.

TCOE will use its funding to collaborate with the Farmersville Police Department to hire an officer to do tobacco-related enforcement and outreach. The officer will work with local merchants to support laws related to the sales and marketing of tobacco products to minors. Law enforcement officers and Choices staff will assess businesses and their placement of tobacco and vaping products and advertisements.

At Farmersville Junior High, Choices prevention educators will present curriculum over the course of the school year on the dangers of tobacco and alcohol. Utilizing the Botvin LifeSkills curriculum, students will learn the short- and long-term effects of tobacco and alcohol use and how advertising companies target youth to buy and use their products. The curriculum also helps students develop the communication, assertiveness and conflict resolution skills to say “no” in high pressure situations.

EUSD will use at least some of the funding to hire a school resource officer through the Exeter Police Department and to provide education for students and their families regarding the harmful effects of tobacco and vaping. The officer will primarily work at Wilson Middle School and Exeter Union High School campuses. Superintendent George Eddy said he isn’t sure exactly how the district will use all of the money because it originally applied for a much larger grant to cover a broader list of anti-tobacco initiatives.

“We have not received word on the final notice form the Attorney General’s Office but are expecting to know by mid-November,” Eddy said. “We have to report on outcomes from the grant so we need to know what the money is approved for. We also do not know if the grant is for three, four or five years.”

Other activities listed in EUSD’s grant application included tobacco and drug prevention counselors as well as smart sensors to detect e-cigarette vapor in bathrooms. Eddy said the district was looking at the Halo Smart Sensor which detects spikes in sound, changes in air quality and humidity and certain chemicals associated with vaping.

“This is a new technology that uses several different sensors to detect vaping,” Eddy said. “But it can also alert us to fighting and other issues.”

The Department of Justice’s Tobacco Grant Program is funded by Proposition 56, the California Healthcare, Research and Prevention Tobacco Tax Act of 2016. Beginning in April 2017, Prop. 56 raised the cigarette tax by $2 per pack, with an equivalent increase on all other tobacco products. Prop. 56 also allocates millions of dollars annually to the California Department of Justice for distribution to local law enforcement agencies for the support and hiring of peace officers for various activities such as investigations and compliance checks to reduce the sale of tobacco to minors.
U.S. News & World Report named Kaweah Delta’s Skilled Nursing Program a Best Nursing Home in its 2019-2020 rankings; puts facility in the top 20% in the nation.

Kaweah Delta’s Skilled Nursing program earned Best Nursing Homes status by achieving the highest possible rating for providing short-term rehabilitation to patients. U.S. News & World Report gives the designation of Best Nursing Home only to those homes that satisfy U.S. News’s assessment of the appropriate use of key services and consistent performance in quality measures. The Best Nursing Homes ratings reflect U.S. News’ analysis of publicly available data, which evaluates factors that most greatly impact patient and resident care, safety, and outcomes.

"While as a team we are very proud of this accomplishment, this recognition is truly something positive for our community because we provide skilled nursing as a service to our community," said Lisa Harrold, director of rehabilitation and skilled nursing services, noting that the team behind this recognition is comprised of everyone from rehab certified and specialty-trained nurses, therapists, and physicians to social workers, housekeepers and others. "We continually focus on our quality of care, so this is definitely validation that those efforts are making a difference for our patients.”

Kaweah Delta offers both short-term rehabilitation and long-term care to patients in Visalia, Harrold said. "We take care of patients with complex needs, so we staff accordingly and our care is focused on the specific needs and goals of each patient. We consistently help more patients return home and with fewer complications in comparison to other facilities," she said. “As a result, we are currently the only skilled nursing facility recognized with a 5-star quality rating in Tulare and Kings Counties by Medicare.”

At Kaweah Delta’s campus on South Court Street, the team offers rehabilitation care to patients who need additional care following a hospital stay and long-term care to patients who require extensive services such as ventilator care, tube feedings, etc. Kaweah Delta also provides short-term rehabilitation to patients at Kaweah Delta’s Rehabilitation Hospital at 840 S. Akers St. in Visalia.

Kaweah Delta was the only facility in Tulare County obtain a “high performing” rating for short-term stays in the report. Linwood Meadows Care Center and Delta Nursing & Rehabilitation Center in Visalia, Providence Lindsay Gardens in Lindsay, Porterville Convalescent Hospital, Providence Sun Villa, Gateway Post Acute and Sierra Valley Rehabilitation in Porterville all received an average rating. However, Sierra Valley Rehabilitation Center did receive a high performing rating for long-term stays, the only facility in the Tulare County to achieve the designation.

Below average facilities for short term stays included Redwood Springs Healthcare Center in Visalia, Dinuba Healthcare in Dinuba, as well as Kaweah Manor Convalescent Hospital, Westgate Gar-
dens Care Center, Merritt Manor Convalescent Hospital and Twin Oaks Rehabilitation & Nursing Center, all in Tulare.

Now in its 10th year, the U.S. News Best Nursing Homes offer comprehensive information about care, safety, health inspections, staffing and more for almost all nursing homes in the country. With this tool, individuals can easily conduct a customized search for a highly rated nursing home by location, Medicare and Medicaid coverage, Alzheimer’s care and size. The Best Nursing Homes reflect U.S. News’ analysis of data collected and published by the federal government using a methodology defined by U.S. News that evaluates factors that U.S. News has determined most greatly impact patient and resident care, safety and outcomes.

To create these free and easy-to-use resources, U.S. News evaluated more than 15,000 homes nationwide, in every state and nearly 100 major metropolitan areas. This year, 2,969 nursing homes earned the designation of a U.S. News Best Nursing Home.

“For the aging population in America, a nursing home should meet the specific level of care based on the needs of each patient or resident,” said Kim Castro, editor and chief content officer of U.S. News.

“The U.S. News Best Nursing Home ratings hone in on measurements like emergency room visits, quality of staff and proper distribution of medical and physical therapy to help families make an informed decision,” she said. “These ratings help individuals and their families begin their search for senior care and should be used in consultation with a medical professional and in-depth on-site visits.”

U.S. News expanded the factors included in the Short-Term Rehabilitation rating that assesses the performance of nursing homes in the care they provide to patients staying at the facility for fewer than 100 days. The quality measures included in this year’s ratings include consistency of registered nurse staffing, use of antipsychotic drugs, and success in preventing falls. For more information behind both U.S. News ratings, refer to the FAQ.

At Kaweah Delta Rehabilitation Hospital, patients are cared for by rehab certified and specialty-trained nurses, therapists, and physicians. The hospital is also home to the only comprehensive cardiac and pulmonary rehabilitation program in the South Valley, the only adult rehabilitation program accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) in the South Valley, and the only CARF-accredited stroke program in Tulare and Kings counties. It was also the first CARF-accredited amputation specialty program in the Central Valley.

This year, California has the highest number on the list, with 169 nursing homes that received a High Performing Rating in Short-Term Rehabilitation and 157 designated as High Performing in Long-Term Care, followed by Pennsylvania and Florida. Washington, D.C., Hawaii and Alaska have the highest proportion of Best Nursing Homes with at least half of all Medicare or Medicaid certified nursing homes in these states receiving a High-Performing designation in either Short-Term Rehabilitation or Long-Term Care, or both.

“While as a team we are very proud of this accomplishment, this recognition is truly something positive for our community because we provide skilled nursing as a service to our community. We continually focus on our quality of care, so this is definitely validation that those efforts are making a difference for our patients.”

LISA HARROLD
Director of Rehabilitation and Skilled Nursing Services for Kaweah Delta Healthcare District

Celebrating Over 108 Years of Serving Our Local Communities!

• Auto
• Business
• Farm
• Home
• Health
• Life

(559) 592-9411
160 South D Street
Exeter, CA
www.nseinsurance.com
CA License # 0496557

1912 2020

Local • Professional • Friendly
Experienced • Competitive

The NSE Protection Team

THANKS! For Your Support
Nutritionists debunk food myths that sea salt, brown eggs and traditional sugar are healthier than table salt, white eggs and high-fructose corn syrup for diabetics.

**Nutritionists: Diabetics should take advice with a Grain of Salt**

*Text by Newswise | Photo by Kaboompics.com from Pexels*

Is sea salt healthier than table salt? Does late-night snacking really cause you to weight gain? Good nutrition is important for managing diabetes. But there are some food myths that may be wrongly influencing your food choices. Here’s what true about salt and nighttime eating, along with clarity on three other common misconceptions:

**Myth: Sea salt is healthier than table salt.**

Sea salt and table salt have the same nutritional value—about 2,400 mg of sodium per teaspoon. The only difference between the salts is how they are processed. Sea salt is made from evaporated ocean water or salty lake water with minimal processing, and so there’s still some mineral content which gives it its flavor and color. Table salt, mined from underground salt deposits, is more heavily processed and contains additives that prevent clumping. But nutritionally, these salts are the same. True salt substitutes are made from potassium salt. Potassium salt, though, tends to have a bitter, metallic taste. “I would encourage people with diabetes to try and keep their sodium intake to 1,500 mg a day,” says Melissa Kinstlinger, outpatient dietitian and certified diabetes educator at The Diabetes and Nutrition Center at Northwest Hospital. “For instance, you can swap cold cereal for old fashioned oats, which contain zero milligrams of sodium.”

**Myth: Eggs from brown shells are better for you than eggs from white ones.**

Eggs with brown shells and eggs with white shells have the same nutritional value. The color of the eggshells, quite simply, depends on the breed of the hen that lays them. White Leghorn chickens lay white eggs; Rhode Island Reds and Plymouth Rocks lay brown eggs. But eggs from brown and white shells are both healthy. A typical egg contains lots of vitamins and minerals (such as vitamins D and B12 and riboflavin) and is an excellent source of protein, and it’s only about 80 calories.

**Myth: Late-night snacking makes you gain weight.**

Always keep in mind that regarding weight loss or weight gain, it does not matter what time of day you eat. A snack in the 100 to 200 calorie range is ideal. Some good options are packaged 100-calorie snacks, low-fat yogurt, fruit or small servings of light butter popcorn. Some ice cream bars are low in calories. Eating every 3 to 4 hours can help regulate your hunger as well as your blood sugars.

**Myth: You should wash raw meat to eliminate bacteria.**

Cooking food at the right temperature is what kills bacteria. Washing raw meat or poultry before cooking is not recommended in large part because bacteria in the juices can cross-contaminate other foods, utensils and surfaces. Some bacteria are so attached to meat they can’t be washed away. With regard to consuming meat, Kinstlinger recommends that people with diabetes “choose meats that are labeled 90% or more lean.”

“Remove skin from chicken. Bake, grill, lightly sauté—maybe try an air fryer for crispy meat with less fat,” she says.

**Myth: High-fructose corn syrup is worse than sugar.**

From a chemical standpoint, high-fructose corn syrup and table sugar are similar. High-fructose corn syrup is a mix of glucose and between 42 percent and 55 percent fructose. Table sugar is also a combination of glucose and fructose in amounts similar to what is in high-fructose corn syrup. Some studies have shown that people metabolize high-fructose corn syrup and table sugar differently. But the goal for people with diabetes is to cut back on sugar in general, no matter what kind it is. “A quick way to decrease sugar in your diet is to drink zero calorie beverages instead of sugared sodas,” Kinstlinger says. The Diabetes and Nutrition Center at Northwest Hospital, recognized by the American Diabetes Association as meeting the national standards for diabetes self-management education and support, serves people with diabetes and other medical conditions that can be improved through nutritional counseling, diet and lifestyle changes. Call 410-601-9729 to learn more.

The LifeBridge Health Diabetes Support Group meets monthly and is free and open to all. Call 410-601-5639 to learn more about upcoming meeting dates. You can visit lifebridgehealth.org or call 410-601-WELL to learn more about scheduling an appointment with one of our physicians.
UROLOGY CARE

From Tulare County experts
In alliance with the
#1 Urology Program
in Southern California

LEARN MORE:
SIERRA-VIEW.COM/UROLOGY
PUTTING A SMILE ON YOUR FACE

Family HealthCare Network offers dental services for children and adults.

DENTAL SEALANTS  GUM EVALUATIONS & TREATMENT  X-RAY SERVICES  FILLINGS, CROWNS, BRIDGES

Dental Locations

12586 Avenue 408  1133 W. Poplar Ave.  401 E. School Ave.  877.960.3426
Cutler-Orosi  Porterville Dental  Visalia School  Hanford
31180 Road 72  9416 Road 238  501 N. Bridge St.  Woodlake
Goshen  Terra Bella  Visalia Bridge Walk-in Center
250 W. 5th St.  263 S. West St.  201 E. Lakeview Ave.  Hanford  Tulare
Tulare

“We provide quality health care to everyone in the communities we serve.”
-Our Mission Statement

Call & schedule and appointment