
Truth Initiative® awards five truth IMPACT scholarships to young adult leaders making a difference in their communities

Recipients from California, Georgia, Maine, North Dakota and Texas are taking action to address youth nicotine use and its impact on mental health, social justice, and the environment

WASHINGTON, D.C. (April 25, 2022) – [Truth Initiative](#), the organization behind the highly effective **truth**® youth smoking, vaping and nicotine public education campaign, announced today the five winners of its annual **truth** IMPACT scholarship. Each year, Truth Initiative puts out a call for young people to apply by sharing how they are taking action in their communities to address tobacco and vaping nicotine. The 2021 application asked young people to specifically share their efforts addressing the impact of nicotine on mental health, social justice, and the environment – all critical issues that are interconnected to tobacco use and vaping nicotine. Selected from applications submitted by young people from across the United States, Truth Initiative is excited to award each of the five winners with \$3,000 in scholarship money to recognize and support the actions they are taking to address smoking, vaping and nicotine use in their communities.

The 2021 **truth** IMPACT scholarship recipients are:

- Alyson Yee, of Elk Grove, California
- Xavier Lynum, of Austell, Georgia
- Jake Warn, of Winslow, Maine
- Ellie Burmeister, of Grand Fork, North Dakota
- Pascal Bakari, of Irving, Texas

All of the young winners are already [taking action](#) to help end youth nicotine use for good. The scholarship funds will further their education as they work to lead and inspire others in their communities especially in regard to improving the availability of mental health resources for young people, the state of social justice in their community, and limiting the impact tobacco products have on the environment.

“We are thrilled to announce this year’s **truth** IMPACT scholars. Each recipient serves as a shining example of their generation’s fight for healthy communities and the important role young people play in building a better future,” said Robin Koval, CEO and President of Truth Initiative. “Each scholar is using their experience of how they have been personally affected by youth nicotine use to



make a positive difference in the lives of their peers. We exceedingly proud of and inspired by their work to lift up young voices and create change in their communities.

E-cigarette use among young people remains at epidemic levels, and public health organizations have continued to fight the youth nicotine epidemic through education, proven-effective tools, and sound scientific research. The latest [2021 National Youth Tobacco Survey](#) shows that youth vaping remains a serious public health threat with over 2 million high school and middle school students using e-cigarettes. This is especially troubling given the fact that nicotine can worsen symptoms of [anxiety and depression](#) in addition to the physical health risks associated with its use.

Advocates in action

The scholarship winners' announcement follows the launch of the [Breath of Stress Air](#) effort from **truth**, which is debunking the marketing of e-cigarettes as a stress reliever and calls out the tobacco industry for selling vaping as a way to deal with stress, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, when in fact, [research shows](#) vaping nicotine can worsen mental health issues including anxiety symptoms and stress levels.

As a former vape user, IMPACT scholarship winner, 21-year-old Jake Warn knows first-hand the mental health impact of vaping nicotine. As a student at Thomas College, he is passionate about sharing his story and the effects vaping nicotine had on his mental health. An athlete and National Honor Society member, he began using vape products in high school as a way to fit in. But he quit using e-cigarettes after it took a toll on his mental and physical health and is now an advocate supporting actions to protect young people from the risks of nicotine addiction and inspiring other young people to quit.

“The reason this work is so important to me is that I know, speaking from experience, that nicotine addiction is scarier and more real than people think,” said Warn. “It’s important to share and spread this information as much as possible!”

The youngest scholarship recipient this year, 17-year-old Alyson Yee, described how nicotine addiction has impacted young people and why she is passionate about educating her peers.



“Going back to school this year made me even more aware of how much tobacco, and particularly vaping, has affected my life. I never realized how prevalent vaping is at my school,” said Yee. “Every time I walk into the bathrooms, people are openly vaping and I smell the strong odor from vape pens. This makes me determined to continue to fight against tobacco use and hope for a future where we shun the tobacco industry entirely. It’s time to take a stand. Because if we don’t, who will?”

Resources to help those looking to quit

Truth Initiative provides support and resources designed specifically for young people to help them quit e-cigarette use through its award-winning and lifesaving nationally recognized **truth** campaign. More than 435,000 young people have enrolled in [This is Quitting](#) from **truth**—a free and anonymous text message quit vaping program for teens and young adults. A randomized [clinical trial](#) found that young adults aged 18-24 who used This is Quitting had nearly 40% higher odds of quitting compared to a control group.

truth also offers a free, comprehensive digital curriculum, [Vaping: Know the truth](#), that gives students the facts about the health dangers of e-cigarettes, its impact on mental health and the help they need to quit. Parents and educators can learn more about the curriculum at: [Truthinitiative.org/curriculum](https://truthinitiative.org/curriculum). For help with quitting vaping, teens and young adults can visit thetruth.com or text “**DITCHVAPE**” to **88709** for free resources.

Take action and learn more

Many of the 2021 **truth** IMPACT Scholarship winners will participate in a Moment of Action on April 27th. As part of the event, young people nationwide are mobilizing online and in person by taking a collective breath to demand decision-makers declare vaping a mental health issue. Learn more about how to take part in the Moment of Action and stand with **truth** in advocating for young people’s mental health by visiting thetruth.com/mentalhealth2022.

Anyone can join **truth** in taking action to address mental health, social justice, and the environment as it relates to youth nicotine use. To learn more about the annual **truth** IMPACT Scholarship or get involved with **truth** visit thetruth.com.



About Truth Initiative®

Truth Initiative is a national public health organization dedicated to achieving a culture where all young people reject smoking, vaping and nicotine and a future where tobacco and nicotine addiction are a thing of the past. In 2020, we celebrated 20 years of saving lives and preventing millions of youth from smoking. Our impact has helped drive the teen smoking rate down from 23% in 2000 to under 3% in 2021. The truth about tobacco and the tobacco industry are at the heart of our proven-effective and nationally recognized **truth**® public education campaign. As youth e-cigarette use threatens to addict a new generation to nicotine, we are leading the fight against tobacco and nicotine addiction in all forms. Our rigorous scientific research and policy studies, community and youth engagement programs supporting populations at high risk of using tobacco, and innovation in tobacco dependence treatment are also helping to end one of the most critical public health battles of our time. Based in Washington D.C., our organization, formerly known as the American Legacy Foundation, was established and funded through the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement between attorneys general from 46 states, five U.S. territories and the tobacco industry. To learn more, visit truthinitiative.org.

About truth®

truth is the longest-running and most successful national tobacco prevention campaign for youth and young adults. The campaign delivers the facts about tobacco use and the marketing tactics of the tobacco industry so that young people can make informed choices and influence others to do the same. We are credited with preventing millions of young people from becoming smokers and are equally committed to achieving the same results in ending the youth e-cigarette epidemic, including by helping young people quit with our first-of-its-kind quit vaping program for teens and young adults This is Quitting. **truth** is part of Truth Initiative®, a national public health organization dedicated to achieving a culture where young people reject smoking, vaping, and nicotine. Learn more about **truth** and the organization behind it at thetruth.com and truthinitiative.org.

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