The primary goal of the two-year initiative is to create a replicable and sustainable model for educating, empowering, and motivating teens to influence policies aimed at reducing tobacco use in their local communities.

Overview of Project
Researchers from ReTHINK Health worked with a group of students at the Hartford Area Career and Technology Center (HACTC) to leverage the energy and passion of teenagers to tackle tobacco use - a major public health challenge facing our region and the nation.

NH Cancer Plan Objective
- Decrease the percentage of NH adolescents who report tobacco use

Background
- The underlying theory motivating the initiative is grounded in the belief that the most powerful social movements have been driven by young people, who can uproot social norms, influence elections, and drive policy changes.
- A primary goal is to partner with local and community activists to affect changes in early health education and tobacco cessation practices and policies that will have a meaningful impact on adolescents.

Results
- During the first year of the project, 30 junior students from the Allied Health and Human Services programs at the HACTC gained in-depth knowledge regarding tobacco use and cancer incorporating their personal value systems
- Students in the program learned about the harmful aspects of tobacco use, as well as the impact of first, second and third hand smoke
- Four students from the HACTC program visited 8 local stores that sell tobacco products and spoke with store managers about their concerns regarding tobacco and its impact on youth
- Store managers were invited to attend a community meeting in March 2016 to discuss ways to limit the advertising displays and placement of tobacco products in local establishments
- High school students were inspired to educate their communities about best health practices
- Students had the opportunity to apply classroom knowledge by taking direct action to influence the health of their communities