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## ROLE OF ADVERTISING IN SMOKING AMONG YOUTH

I am what is known as a laryngectomie in medical terms. On the 27<sup>th</sup> October 1989 my larynx had to be surgically removed after I was diagnosed with cancer of the vocal chords. I smoked approximately 20-30 cigarettes per day for 33 years.

I started smoking at the age of sixteen years. I started smoking for various reasons:

- 1] I grew up in with a family of smokers. both my parents, my sister and my brother smoked.
- 2] All my favorite movie stars smoked.
- 3] The glamorization of smoking through advertising.
- 4] When I was in high school all my friends smoked and thus I also smoked because of peer pressure.

When I started smoking I was not aware of all the dangerous substances contained in tobacco smoke, to me. And my friends it was the proper thing to do as everybody else was doing it. At the age of nineteen years I tried to quit and found that I could not. Little did I realize that I had become a nicotine addict.

After my operation I started helping with the rehabilitation of other laryngectomies. until now I have already assisted 152 patients of which only 3 were non-smokers. Of these 3 people two lived and worked with smokers for over 30 years.

Eight years ago I started visiting schools, youth groups and other youth organizations and talking to young people on the dangers of smoking. I have already spoken at over 200 schools. and statistics have shown that the majority of adolescents already start smoking in their early teens and even younger. The majority of calls I receive are from primary schools. Many principals at secondary schools tell me that their biggest problem are the children coming over from primary schools. I have had numerous instances where 13-15 year old children asked me for help as they are already smoking for approximately 2-3 years and that all their attempts to quit had failed. I have even had teenagers telling me that have already tried dagga as they did not enjoy cigarette smoking anymore.

Because I believe that our children are being exploited for financial gain by the tobacco industry and that non-smokers are being endangered by smoking in public places, I support all and any legislation against tobacco products.

Dennis Woest