



**TOBACCO FREE  
COMMUNITIES**  
Delaware, Otsego & Schoharie

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# The Tobacco Free Times

## Menthol: The Ultimate Deadly Flavor

By Chris Bradley and Jennifer Hill

Flavors, including menthol, continue to be used in cigars, hookah, and smokeless tobacco, packaged in colorful wrappings, imbued with sweet tastes, and sold at cheap prices. These characteristics make the products enticing to youth and inexperienced smokers.

Yet menthol is not often perceived as a flavor designed to entice new tobacco users even though it is no different. It is made from a chemical compound extracted from peppermint or corn mint plants or created synthetically and, in fact, may be even more dangerous because menthol's cooling effects on the mouth and throat reduce the harshness of cigarette smoke. It also suppresses the coughing reflex, which makes inhaling smoke from cigarettes tolerable.



The tobacco industry has profited greatly from the perception that menthol is not a flavor while marketing and packaging mentholated tobacco products in the same way it does its other flavored tobacco products.

It also has used its historic ties and marketing to African Americans and other minority populations to pre-

vent the sale of menthol cigarettes from being banned. In 2009, the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act banned flavors in cigarettes to protect youth from those products, but importantly, excluded menthol in the process.

The 2009 flavored cigarette ban did reduce adolescent tobacco use, but the effects were diminished by

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## Quitting Tobacco Just Got Easier — Pass It On



Quitting smoking or vaping just got easier! New York State residents can get **up to a three months' supply of nicotine gum free** from the New York State Quitline while supplies last. The shipping fee is included.

**The time to quit is now.** People feeling isolated, depressed and/or stressed from the pandemic and economic hardships are smoking and vaping more. But in addition to other adverse health conditions, smokers and vapers are at an increased risk of developing a se-



**Share this offer with your family and friends who smoke or vape!**

vere form of COVID-19 if they are infected with the coronavirus. Quitting will actually result in greatly improved health mental and physical health, which will help keep chronic, debilitating and fatal diseases at bay.

Call **1-866-NY-QUITS (1-866-697-8487)** or visit [nysmokefree.com](http://nysmokefree.com) to sign up for the time-limited nicotine gum offer. Quit Coaches are standing by to help those who apply to receive the appropriate gum dosage and quit-support.

# Super Smash Tourney Brings Fun, Important Info on Addictive Substances

By Chris Bradley

Tobacco Free Communities Delaware, Otsego & Schoharie's Reality Check team (RC) teamed up with Leath-erstocking Education on Alcoholism/Addictions Founda-tion's (LEAF) Super Smash Bro's regional gaming tour-nament on Saturday, August 22nd. Creative engagement with youth —Activated!

About 20 teens across six counties, including from Otsego and Schoharie, entered the tournament and competed live over the streaming platform, Twitch.

In exchange for a free entry fee, tournament participants filled out a survey that gauged their knowledge of alco-hol, tobacco and other addictive drugs. LEAF and our RC live-posted prevention messages in chatboxes to build knowledge and awareness of the unhealthy impact addic-tion to these substances have on people's interpersonal relationships and their communities.

RC also shared information to youth participants and viewers of the livestream concerning tobacco marketing, litter and e-cigarettes, including deceptive marketing practices used by the tobacco industry to hook and addict youth for life.

Who says you can't have fun while making all of our lives better?



One of the prevention messages LEAF and our Reality Check team posted in chatboxes alongside LEAF's free Super Smash Bros tournament held on Saturday, August 22, 2020.

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the availability of menthol cigarettes and other flavored tobacco products, according to a [2017 National Institutes of Health analysis](#). In 2016, menthol cigarette sales were 35% of the cigarette market.

Results from a 2020 survey of Otsego, Delaware and Schoharie counties' residents conducted by Siena College Research Institute pointed to people's tendency to not think of menthol as a flavor or of it having the same harmful impact on youth and long-term health as other flavored tobacco products.

For instance, of the 350 Otsego County residents surveyed, 74% agreed that candy- and fruit-flavored

**"...menthol cigarettes are often "starters" for youth, most of whom will remain addicted to tobacco products for life."**

tobacco products, such as chew, make it easier for youth to start using them. But only 42% agreed that menthol in cigarettes made it easier for youth to start smoking and only 29% thought menthol cigarettes made it harder to stop smoking.

In fact, menthol cigarettes are often "starters" for youth, most of whom will remain addicted to tobacco products for life. In 2014, over 80 percent of youth who

used tobacco said they chose flavored tobacco to use their first time. Adults who smoke menthol cigarettes are less successful in quitting than those who smoke non-menthol ones.

It is no surprise that the continued availability of menthol in cigarettes and the tobacco industry's marketing of them continue to attract young, inexperienced smokers as the number of flavored cigarettes diminished.

And as long as we continue to perceive menthol as a non-flavor without having the same harmful consequences of flavored tobacco products, the tobacco industry will continue to successfully entice youth to start smoking and become lifelong users.