

# How Minnesota is helping marginalized groups quit smoking

by Eric Berger / July 07, 2022

The Quit Partner initiative is reaching out to three specific groups with its latest campaign.



The latest campaign from Quit Partners is trying to reach Minnesota residents outside the Twin Cities.

MINNEAPOLIS: Quit Partner, a Minnesota state initiative that helps people stop using tobacco, has three groups in mind with its latest campaign: state residents outside the Twin Cities, African Americans and the Hmong community.

“We wanted to make sure that we were reflecting some of those communities within Minnesota that are struggling with commercial tobacco,” said Zachary Keenan, design director for Haberman, the marketing agency that created the Keep Quitting campaign.

The Minnesota Department of Health effort aims to use relatable moments faced by people trying to quit tobacco to reach those in disproportionately affected communities.

The campaign, which launched in mid-June, comes as cigarette smoking has fallen significantly in recent decades. In 2005, 20% of the U.S. population were smokers, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In 2020, that figure was down to 12%. However, the numbers are higher among some populations. In 2020, the percentage of cigarette smokers among non-Hispanic white adults was 62% higher in rural areas than in urban areas, according to the CDC.

“We want to make sure that we’re communicating to the state as a whole, so [we are] making sure that we represent rural communities, too,” said Keenan.

A [campaign video](#) begins with a Black woman looking pained as she stands before a bathroom mirror and puts

a pack of menthol cigarettes in the sink and lets water run over it. The tobacco industry long marketed menthol cigarettes to African Americans; the Food and Drug Administration is [working to ban](#) the sale of such cigarettes.

“This will be the hardest thing you will ever do,” says a voiceover. “Quitting is where life gets real.”

The video then shows a man who appears to be working in a rural area and a Hmong man taking positive steps to quit smoking, such as using a nicotine patch and gum, and appearing to feel better as a result. The spot concludes by promoting Quit Partner, which offers free coaching, nicotine patches and gum.

The group worked on the campaign with the Hmong American Partnership, a nonprofit that helps the Hmong population in the Twin Cities. The organization connected the creatives with a Hmong family, which invited the team to shoot the commercial in its home, Keenan said. The spot shows them enjoying a meal of traditional Hmong dishes.

“[It has] small touches that might be overlooked by people who wouldn’t pick up on it but the people who we need to communicate to definitely see those things,” Keenan said.

Quit Partner invested \$185,000 to produce the campaign, according to the group. It is promoting it through a mix of video, social, digital display, out-of-home and print executions, the organization said in a statement. It is also working with 18 community publications to reach people who are most affected by tobacco-related disparities.

The campaign will run into summer 2023.

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