



BEST NEW PROGRAM 2024

POWHATAN COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION

Program Title: Capes Over Vapes

Dates: August 2024 – March 2025 (continuing through June 2027)

Location: Fighting Creek Park, Pocahontas Landmark Center, and Turner Park

In January 2024, Powhatan County Parks and Recreation received a \$55,540 Community Innovation grant from the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth to implement a new program titled "Capes Over Vapes" (COV). This three-year initiative is designed to address the urgent public health issue of teen vaping through a creative blend of active lifestyle promotion, peer-led education, and smoke-free social entertainment.

Program Overview and Timeline

Capes Over Vapes launched in August 2024 as a quarterly event series tailored for Powhatan County teens and their families. The program was initiated with a planning kickoff in March 2024, involving teens, Parks and Recreation staff, and Virginia Department of Health personnel. Monthly meetings guided the implementation of year one activities, which included filming a youth-led anti-vape commercial in July, hosting a movie night in the park in August, and an indoor teen movie night in November.

Innovative Program Design

The strength of Capes Over Vapes lies in its holistic, participatory approach that recognizes teen vaping as both a health and social challenge. The program strategically integrates physical activity, peer leadership, and media advocacy within a single event framework. By embedding vape prevention messaging into enjoyable activities and peer-produced content, COV effectively shifts social norms and encourages teens to envision vibrant, smoke-free lifestyles.

The kickoff event at Fighting Creek Park featured interactive outdoor games like corn hole and hula hoop contests that energized teens and promoted community spirit. Teen leaders introduced a PowerPoint lesson called *Take Care of Your Body*, developed by the Stanford Tobacco Prevention Toolkit, incorporating an interactive Q&A with superhero-themed capes as prizes. Following this, participants viewed a locally produced anti-vape commercial created by youth leaders, ensuring authentic messaging that resonates deeply. The evening concluded with a smoke-free screening of *Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse*, a new Marvel comic film popular among youth.

This successful event model repeats quarterly—in August, November, March, and June—over the grant's three-year term. Summer events align with the *Movie in the Park* series, while November and March offerings are held as indoor teen movie nights, demonstrating the program's adaptability to seasons and venues. The November 2024 movie night at the Pocahontas Landmark Center included free food, games such as ping pong and giant Connect 4, a photo booth with superhero cutouts, and a Virginia Department of Health booth providing Quitline resources and educational activities.

Funding, Promotion, and Partnerships

Funded primarily by the \$55,540 state grant, Capes Over Vapes also benefits from approximately



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\$5,000 in in-kind contributions, including volunteer hours and facility use. The budget allocation prioritizes impact and sustainability with 40% dedicated to event coordination and teen volunteer stipends; 30% focused on youth-led commercial production; 20% reserved for marketing, educational materials, and outreach; and 10% for ongoing program evaluation.

Strong community partnerships anchor the program's success. The Powhatan County Health Department delivers trusted health education and vape prevention across all events. The Elizabeth Randolph Lewis YMCA contributes youth leaders from its Leaders Club who actively participate in event planning, marketing, and evaluation, fostering youth ownership. Promotional efforts leverage social media, school communications, and teen ambassadors from middle and high schools to ensure broad visibility and sustained engagement.

Effectiveness and Community Impact

Powhatan County faces a significant vaping challenge, exemplified by five vape shops concentrated along Route 60 and survey data revealing that 81% of youth find vape products easily accessible, with 57% having tried vaping. Capes Over Vapes responds by creating vape-free social spaces that replace nicotine-laden environments with supportive peer networks and positive lifestyle alternatives.

Since its August 2024 launch, the program's three events have averaged 60 teens and family members per event—reflecting strong community interest. Post-event surveys gather participant feedback, assist in selecting future vape-free movies, and provide access to cessation resources. These surveys also inform ongoing program adaptations to ensure relevance and responsiveness to community needs.

Capes Over Vapes fosters youth empowerment by promoting peer leadership and reducing stigma around vaping cessation. Through a compelling combination of fun, fitness, education, and cinema, the program creates a protective social environment that addresses both the demand for and normalization of vaping among teens.

Efficient Resource Use and Program Excellence

Capes Over Vapes demonstrates exemplary program management through strategic resource allocation, meaningful community partnerships, and authentic youth engagement. The program leverages grant funding alongside volunteerism and facility access contributions to maximize fiscal responsibility and community investment. Balancing resources across coordination, media production, outreach, and evaluation ensures all critical program aspects are well-supported.

Its flexible design accommodates both indoor and outdoor settings, seasonality, and diverse teen interests while maintaining a consistent health promotion message. Collaboration with stakeholders from Parks and Recreation, public health, education, and youth organizations fosters broad-based support and program sustainability.



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Conclusion

Capes Over Vapes represents an evidence-informed, youth-centered, and community-responsive approach to one of Powhatan County's most pressing health challenges. By transforming the threat of teen vaping into an opportunity for connection, leadership, and wellness, the program sets a new standard for innovative public health prevention efforts.

We proudly nominate *Capes Over Vapes* for VRPS recognition as a forward-thinking program that improves community health, cultivates youth leadership, and inspires teens to embrace active, vape-free lives.



Teen actors for the Capes Over Vapes anti-vape commercial.



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SEEKING TEEN VOLUNTEERS!

BACKGROUND

Powhatan Parks and Recreation is seeking teens (grades 8-12) to serve on the Capes Over Vapes event planning committee. Capes Over Vapes is a grant-funded program creatively developed by County staff to address the concern of vape use amongst teens in the community. The program will use volunteer teen leaders to aid in hosting a movie series that draws in fellow teens and provides education and advocacy about the dangers of nicotine vaping, while also providing support and useful resources for how to quit.

BE A TEEN SUPERHERO!



- Educate your peers on the dangers of vaping and nicotine and plan fun, superhero movie nights!
- Get volunteer hours and build your resume!
- Gain valuable skills in [leadership](#), [advertising](#), [content creation](#), [event planning](#), [videography](#), [recreation programming](#), and [health education](#).
- Develop and film an anti-vaping ad.
- Plan 4 movie nights with games and activities
- Movies in June & August will be shown with Movies in the Park and movies in November & March will be shown in the gym at Parks & Rec.

GET INVOLVED!

Involvement includes attendance at planning meetings (virtual or in-person) and at all planned programs and events, in addition to support with program marketing, community outreach, and engagement.



NEXT MEETING:

Tuesday, Sept 10 | 3:30pm-4:30pm
@ Parks & Rec, 4290 Anderson Hwy

Handout advertisement used to recruit teens at Powhatan High School career day.



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Teens filming anti-vape commercial with Dovetail Picture+Post at Powhatan Middle School, July 2024.



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POWHATAN COUNTY PRESENTS

VILLAGE MOVIES IN THE PARK

The poster features four movie posters arranged horizontally. From left to right: **SHREK** (The greatest fairy tale never told), **HOMeward BOUND** (The Disney classic about three dogs who find their way home), **SPIDER-MAN** (Across the Spider-Verse), and **FIELD OF DREAMS** (If you believe in miracles, they happen to you). The background is a dark blue night sky with stars and a film strip winding around the text. A large bucket of popcorn is on the left, and a small screen in the distance shows the event's logo.

JUN 28 **JUL 26** **AUG 23** **SEP 27**

FIGHTING CREEK PARK | SHOWTIME AT DUSK

Social media advertisement for the first Capes Over Vapes-sponsored event, on August 23, tied into the 2024 Movie in the Park series.



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First movie, Spiderman: Across the Spiderverse- held August 23, 2024, outdoors in Fighting Creek Park on the soccer fields.



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TEEN MOVIE NIGHT

FRIDAY NOV 15
DOORS AT 6PM
SHOWTIME @ 7PM

FREE DINNER, DRINKS & POPCORN

PARKS & REC GYM
4290 ANDERSON HWY, POWHATAN

GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY

Logos for "GAMES & EVENTS", "VDH" (Virginia Department of Health), and "POWHATAN COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION" are also present.

Advertisement for the indoor movie, held November 15, 2024



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Set up in the Pocahontas Landmark Center gym for the first indoor movie, Guardians of the Galaxy, on November 15, 2024.



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**VOTE ON THE
NEXT MOVIE!**



Yard sign at events for the survey, which sneaks in questions about nicotine use.