

# YOUTH PROJECT PROMOTES "CLEAN AIR" THROUGH ART

*Portland Public Health Partners with Youth Employment Program for a Second Year*

## AT A GLANCE

For the second year in a row, Portland Public Health (PPH) spent the summer hosting a team of local high school students through the Gateway to Opportunity (G2O) program. With the project goal to create a mural that promotes tobacco-free spaces, this program focused on providing youth who identify as Black, Indigenous, People of Color and/or from low socioeconomic backgrounds the opportunities to develop their career and leadership skills.

## PUBLIC HEALTH CHALLENGE

According to the 2021 National Youth Tobacco Survey, more than 2 million U.S. youth currently use e-cigarettes and about 1 in 4 use e-cigarettes daily. Social and community connections are important protective factors for reducing the risk of substance use initiation, including tobacco products. For these reasons and more, it is important to promote community building and tobacco-free spaces to support individuals trying to live tobacco-free.



## APPROACH

After a positive 2020 experience working with youth to produce a tobacco prevention PSA, PPH was eager to partner with G2O once again. G2O is a 6-week summer employment program that provides career development trainings to high school participants and pairs them with host sites to complete a project. This year, PPH's project was to create a mural with a "Clean Air" theme to promote tobacco-free spaces. This was done through the help of a number of community partnerships, including Goulding Chiropractic who donated a wall of their building to host the mural and The Color Wizard who is a professional muralist who was hired to guide the team through the process of planning and creating the mural.

*"[I will remember]  
how we all worked on  
[this] together.  
The mural was the end  
product of all our ideas."*

*-Youth Feedback from  
Follow-Up Survey*

## RESULTS

Throughout the 6 weeks, 4 participants met in-person and 1 joined virtually to learn more about tobacco prevention, community development work, and develop career skills. Youth participants also received Youth ENDS education and were trained in the Sidekicks program to better equip themselves with the goal of promoting tobacco-free spaces. The mural project was completed in the final week of G2O and sports a QR code that directs viewers to more information about the project and how to access the Maine QuitLink.