



# Collaborate with Community: Breathe-ZY Educational Program

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## INTRODUCTION

The [Breathe-ZY education program](#) was created by Kim Bennion, MsHS, RRT, CHC, FAARC, Research Director for Intermountain Health, as an outreach program to curb the use of e-cigarettes by youth in two Utah counties. Developed in 1995, the student-led program has also raised awareness of respiratory therapy as a profession. Breathe-ZY takes respiratory therapist (RT) students to local schools to teach elementary, junior high and high school students about lung health and the dangers of smoking and vaping.

## HOW IT WORKS

According to Kim, the program – often characterized as a free, portable learning lab – has increased youth and adult [awareness](#) of the impact of tobacco on lung and overall health. It also has enhanced the value of RTs as key members of the healthcare community while engaging the RT student population in their state and national professional associations.

Today, the nationally recognized program extends to more than 10 programs across Utah, New Mexico, Idaho and Washington, and has reached 11,500 students through 2022. The Utah Society for Respiratory Care funds the Breathe-ZY program.

Not only has Breathe-ZY increased health promotion and disease awareness, it also has influenced legislative change in Utah. According to Kim, the program illustrated the need to increase the tobacco purchase age to 21 in [2019](#) and to spur e-cigarette regulation that went live in 2018. Bottom line, says Kim, is that the program has significantly contributed to raising awareness about the field of respiratory care and serves as an important leadership and mentorship resource for RT students.



## OPPORTUNITY

When RT students, professionals and other healthcare students/professionals and community partners from Utah and beyond unite with key objectives to adopt the Breathe-ZY program, the profession can realize significant benefits for a relatively nominal initial investment.