



JOIN THE MOVEMENT

On February 5, 2026, Dunwoody Strong hosted Kenny Haney, Community Health Advocate at Northside Hospital Cancer Institute, for a special program at Dunwoody High School. Haney shared expert insights on substance use, misuse, and prevention, with a focus on vaping among teens.

Here's the full Q&A, including questions submitted ahead of time.

Understanding the Landscape

Q. What are the most common myths kids believe about vaping?

Many teens believe vaping isn't addictive and that they can quit anytime. There's also a widespread misconception that it has no serious long-term health effects. Another common belief is that vaping helps reduce anxiety, when in reality it can increase anxiety and lower a teen's ability to cope with everyday stress over time.

Prevention & Communication

Q. What conversations are most effective for parents to have with their kids?

Haney encourages assertive, open communication — honest without being aggressive or passive. Difficult conversations build trust, especially when parents stay actively involved in their child's daily life: friendships, teachers, lunchroom dynamics, and social stressors. The more informed parents are, the lower the risk of vaping and other addictive behaviors.

Q. What language should parents avoid so kids don't shut down?

Avoid aggressive or judgmental language. Lead with empathy and, when appropriate, share personal experiences to build trust and relatability. If rules are broken, consequences may



be necessary, but concern and compassion should remain front and center. The focus should be on safety and health, not simply right versus wrong.

If a Parent Suspects or Knows Their Child Is Vaping

Q. What's the most productive first response?

Start by asking directly. This opens the door to an honest conversation and helps gauge trust. If your child admits to vaping, respond with concern rather than immediate punishment: express disappointment, but emphasize that your priority is their health and well-being. A supportive tone makes teens less defensive and more open to quitting.

If they deny it despite clear evidence, calmly explain what you've observed and bring the conversation back to health and trust. This can also help uncover why they felt the need to hide it.

Q. When does experimentation become a bigger concern?

Consistency is the key warning sign. Frequency of use combined with signs of dependence signals greater risk. Common red flags include justifications like, "It helps my anxiety" or "I only do it when I'm stressed."

Q. What helps teens quit, and what backfires?

Support, concern, and active involvement in the quitting process are the most effective tools. Teens often begin quitting for their parents, but through the process many come to recognize the extent of their dependence.

What tends to backfire: immediate punishment, scare tactics, and horror stories. Teens often respond defensively and may insist addiction or long-term consequences won't happen to them.

Practical Takeaways

Q. What are three concrete things parents can do?

1. Learn the basics of vaping — terminology, products, and where teens may access them.
2. Talk with your child about the presentation and what they see at school.
3. Ask direct questions such as:
 - Do you see people vaping at school?
 - Is there a specific place where it happens?
 - Has anyone ever offered it to you?

Q. What resources do you recommend for parents and teens?

- Northside’s Built to Quit: <https://www.northside.com/community-wellness/built-to-quit>
- Truth Initiative: <https://truthinitiative.org/>
- Georgia Department of Public Health’s Live Vape Free: <https://livevapefree.com/>
- American Lung Association: <https://www.lung.org/quit-smoking/e-cigarettes-vaping>

Q. How can schools and parents partner more effectively?

Parent advocacy is critical. After speaking with their children, parents should share relevant concerns with school leadership — including where vaping is happening and whether products are being sold on campus. The more information schools have, the better they can respond within their policies and constrain

Big Picture

Q. What’s the one message parents should remember?

Nicotine is one of the most addictive substances teens encounter. It is inexpensive, easy to access, and often socially normalized, which can make it seem less serious than it is. When a child is using nicotine, punishment should not be the first response. Education, support, and early intervention are far more effective.

About the Speaker



Kenny Haney is a Community Health Advocate Lead for Northside Hospital’s Cancer Institute. Over the past 8 years he has helped build the Built To Quit: Smoking and Tobacco Cessation program. This has allowed him to help spread education about smoking/tobacco/vaping cessation. During this timeframe he has spoken to over 80,000 students, teachers, and parents about the vaping/e-cigarette epidemic. Through these educational seminars he has been able to provide answers and guidance to these individuals. This includes being a guest at the Georgia Society for Respiratory Care 2023 annual conference and the 2024 International Cancer Education Conference, where he was able to speak in-depth to healthcare professionals who are battling this epidemic daily.