

Despite strong warnings, some kids light up



Nearly 40 percent of teens in western North Carolina use tobacco. McDowell High is offering smoking cessation classes for teens and adults. (Photo by Peggy Rowe)

Where there's smoke, there's someone to help them stop

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It was easier for 17-year-old Kelly Silver to get cigarettes than Nicorette, the gum to help her stop smoking.

One pack of gum costs more than 10 packs of smokes. You have to be 18 to buy it, too, and there's little chance of borrowing a piece

of Nicorette the way you can bum a cigarette.

So Kelly, a McDowell High senior, was hooked on cigarettes before she was old enough to buy them. And before she was



Silver

old enough to get the help she wanted.

"I just wanted to graduate not having any regrets," she said. "I want to be healthy. I want to have healthy babies one day."

It's the scenario facing many of western North Carolina's high school students, 37 percent of whom use some form of tobacco,

(See TEEN, 3A)