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Chittick (center) knew that she could not change a person's behavior toward going outside, but she could teach them why indoor tanning is so dangerous.

Insight into dangers of indoor tanning

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After volunteering with the Children's Melanoma Prevention Foundation last summer, Hingham High senior Catherine Chittick wanted to do more with melanoma awareness and prevention. The Hingham High Senior Project Program provided Chittick the perfect opportunity to continue her work with the Children's Melanoma Prevention Foundation, while also preparing for a career in nursing.

Working with teacher Susan Keyes and Maryellen Maguire-Eisen from the Children's Melanoma Prevention Foundation, Chittick was able to run an extensive project on the hazards of indoor tanning.

Chittick knew that she could not change a person's behavior toward going outside, but she could teach them why indoor tanning is so dangerous.

The Senior Project Program at Hingham High allows qualified seniors to devote their entire fourth quarter to a project of their choice. For 20 hours a week, seniors are able to research a topic, hold an internship, or do community service. Hingham High School Principal Paula Girouard-McCann said, "The Senior Project Program allows seniors to take what they have been learning for 12 years in school and apply it in a real world setting." Chittick's project started with a focus group - a psychology class of juniors and seniors - who took a survey that addressed behaviors and attitudes toward indoor tanning and was followed by an open discussion.

Chittick believes that the open discussion was a good way for the students to voice their opinions about indoor tanning, while also providing Chittick the opportunity to further educate her peers about the myths and facts of indoor tanning.

Through the focus group and presentations in other classes, Chittick heard many students saying, "If I had know about the **dangers** of indoor tanning, I never would have done it." Girouard-McCann placed a notice about Chittick's project in Hingham High Happenings, HHS' monthly publication, which generated a little bit of a buzz around Hingham High, Chittick said. "People were really listening and engaging in conversations, gaining **insight** and education about issue that they didn't know much about." "Catherine's project epitomizes the Senior Project," Girouard-McCann said as Catherine took an issue she was passionate about and brought attention to it within the HHS community.

Chittick also released a public service announcement to HHS with facts about the hazards of indoor tanning that the focus group found effective, to which students strongly responded.

"People were telling their friends who tan and reposting the public service announcement on their Facebook accounts," Chittick said.

Chittick said the support and respect she received for her project speaks to how supportive the HHS community is; "people respect and understand what you are saying." Chittick and Maguire-Eisen took the project a step further and launched a petition, which received more than 500 signatures, about implementing restrictive laws on indoor tanning.

The petition was in support of banning tanning services to those under 16-years old and requiring

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Chittick also shared her findings with the HHS community through a presentation at the HHS community meeting.