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**Colorado Kids to ‘Kick Butts’ on March 21**

***State Leaders Challenged to Create First Tobacco-Free Generation***

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Kids in Colorado will unite against tobacco use on March 21 as they join thousands of young people nationwide to mark Kick Butts Day. More than 1,000 events are planned across the United States for this annual day of youth activism, sponsored by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. (See below for a list of local events.)

On Kick Butts Day, kids encourage their peers to be tobacco-free, reject tobacco companies’ devious marketing and urge elected officials to help make the next generation tobacco-free.

This year, Kick Butts Day is focusing attention on the progress the U.S. has made in reducing youth smoking and the actions needed to create the first tobacco-free generation. Since 2000, the national smoking rate among high school students has fallen by 71 percent (from 28 percent in 2000 to 8 percent in 2016). However, the fight against tobacco is far from over:

* Tobacco use is still the No. 1 cause of preventable death in the U.S., killing over 480,000 people and costing about $170 billion in health care expenses each year.
* Tobacco companies spend $8.9 billion a year – $1 million every hour – to market tobacco products in the U.S., often in ways that appeal to kids.
* Electronic cigarettes have become the most popular tobacco product used by kids – nationwide, 11.3 percent of high school students use e-cigarettes compared to 8 percent who smoke cigarettes. The latest trend with teens is JUUL, an e-cigarette that looks like a computer flash drive and comes in flavors like mango and fruit medley.

In Colorado, tobacco use claims 5,100 lives and costs $1.89 billion in health care bills each year. Currently, 8.6 percent of Colorado’s high school students smoke.

On Kick Butts Day, kids and health advocates are calling on elected officials to implement proven strategies that make up a “roadmap to a tobacco-free generation.” These strategies include tobacco tax increases, comprehensive smoke-free laws, raising the tobacco sale age to 21, well-funded tobacco prevention programs and banning the sale of flavored tobacco products.

“On Kick Butts Day, kids are celebrating the progress we’ve made to reduce tobacco use and building momentum to get us across the finish line,” said Matthew L. Myers, President of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. “Elected leaders in every state can help create the first tobacco-free generation by supporting proven strategies to prevent youth tobacco use.”

On Kick Butts Day, kids join in creative events ranging from classroom activities to educate their peers about the harmful ingredients in cigarettes to rallies at state capitols.

In Colorado, activities include:

**Denver Public Health** and the office of **Denver City Council** President Albus Brook will host games at a booth at the **16th Street Mall.** They will also offer information about tobacco-free living and the recent 16th Street Mall “Breathe Easy” campaign. Time: 10 AM. Location: 1001 16th Street, Denver. Contact: Angie Kogovsek (720) 318-8500.

Members of the **Silverton Tobacco-Prevention Youth Coalition** will host activities explaining the dangers of tobacco, and choose three locations around town to display a poster youth have signed as a pledge to never use tobacco products. Time: 7 PM. Location: 414 Greene Street, Silverton. Contact: Becky Joyce (970) 769-8473.

The **Students Working Against Tobacco** club of **Panorama Middle School** will dress in zombie makeup to host after-school information booths offering a chance to spin a trivia wheel, followed by a mile-and-a-half cigarette butt cleanup. Time: 4:15 PM. Location: 2145 South Chelton Road, Colorado Springs. Contact: Blanca Smith (719) 963-7658.

Students from **The Tobacco Prevention Army** at **Englewood Leadership Academy** will hand out buttons and pamphlets about tobacco use, and offer classmates a chance to sign a pledge to never use tobacco products. Time: 12 PM. Location: 3800 South Logan Street, Englewood. Contact: Julie White (720) 413-3567.

The **Boys and Girls Club of Craig** will host a day of tobacco-free activities, starting with a morning of events aimed at teaching youth the costs and dangers of tobacco use, followed by an afternoon of community engagement. At the end of the day, participants will pledge to never use tobacco products. Time: 9 AM. Location: 1324 E. Highway 40, Craig. Contact: Kari Zimmerman (970) 826-0411.

On March 23 and March 26, students from **Ayres Primary Elementary and** **Campbell Elementary**, respectively, will participate in the annual **Cops and Kids** program. **Sterling police officers** and **STAND** coalitionmembers will discuss the danger of secondhand smoke, and demonstrate how smoking damages lungs and chewing tobacco harms oral health. Contact: Lynn Bournia (970) 571-5954.

March 23: Time: 8 AM. Location: 1812 Robin Road, Sterling.

March 26: Time: 8 AM. Location: 902 Clark Street, Sterling.

All events will take place March 21 unless otherwise indicated. For a full list of Kick Butts Day activities in Colorado, visit [www.kickbuttsday.org/map](http://www.kickbuttsday.org/map). Additional information about tobacco, including state-by-state statistics, can be found at [www.tobaccofreekids.org](http://www.tobaccofreekids.org).