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

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

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Kids in Kansas 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 Kansas, tobacco use claims 4,400 lives and costs $1.12 billion in health care bills each year. Currently, 10.2 percent of Kansas’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 Kansas, activities include:

On March 19, students with the **Allen County Multi-Agency Team (ACMAT)** and **Thrive Allen County** in **Iola** will create an eye-catching display on the town square with tombstones, body bags, and messages educating the community about the dangers of tobacco. The display will remain in the square all week. Time: 10 AM. Location: Allen County Town Square, 1 N. Washington Avenue, Iola. Contact: Elizabeth Hopkins (620) 305-9905.

Fourth and fifth grade members of the **Boys & Girls Club** of **Lawrence** will collect cigarette butts in the community and spread awareness of the dangers of tobacco. Time: 10–11 AM. Location: 1047 Massachusetts Street, Lawrence. Contact: Monica Dittmer (785) 550-5229.

The students of **Mill Valley High School** in **Shawnee** will hold their 13th annual Kick Butts Day Volleyball Tournament. Students will also participate in a tobacco trivia contest and all proceeds will be donated to the American Cancer Society. Time: 6:30–8:30 PM. Location: Mill Valley High School, 5900 Monticello Road, Shawnee. Contact: Amy McClure (913) 209-9877.

Students of **Communities That Care** in **Hutchinson** will record a video at **Carey Park** to celebrate their newly tobacco-free parks. On March 22, they will continue to “Kick Butts” by playing a game kicking toilet paper into soccer goals with the seventh graders at Hutchinson Middle School. Contact: Carla Smith (620) 560-9742.

March 21: Time: 12:10–12:40 PM. Location: Carey Park, 1600 Carey Park Boulevard, Hutchinson.

March 22: Time: 10:50 AM-12 PM. Location: Hutchinson Middle School, 210 E. Avenue A, Hutchinson.

On March 22, **Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD)** in **Garden City** will educate their peers about the dangers of tobacco by wearing targets on their shirts to represent the number of people who die from tobacco-related illnesses each hour and creating displays that demonstrate tobacco’s harmful effects on lungs and oral health. Students who sign a pledge to be the tobacco-free will receive a sticker. Time: 11:30 AM–12:10 PM. Location: Kenneth Henderson Middle School, 2406 Fleming Street, Garden City. Contact: Kellie Pitts (620) 805-8509.

All events will take place March 21 unless otherwise indicated. For a full list of Kick Butts Day activities in Kansas, 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).