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

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

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Kids in Minnesota 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 Minnesota, tobacco use claims 5,900 lives and costs $2.51 billion in health care bills each year. Currently, 9.6 percent of Minnesota’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 Minnesota, activities include:

Students from **Anglos Latinos Motivated to Succeed (ALMAS)** at **Henry Sibley High School** in Mendota Heights will hold their annual Kick Butts Day shoe drive. The students collect donated shoes to represent how many people die from tobacco-related disease every hour, creating a display at school. The shoes are donated to local nonprofit Neighbors Inc. Time: 3:15 PM. Location: Henry Sibley High School, 1897 Delaware Avenue, Mendota Heights. Contact: Robert Hanson (612) 382-6597.

Students from **Lancaster Public School** will sign a tobacco-free pledge, hold an anti-tobacco poster contest, and learn about the dangers of smoking and what it can do to your body. Time: 8 AM. Location: Lancaster Public School, 401 Central Avenue S., Lancaster. Contact: Sandie Nelson (218) 843-1580.

Students from **Wadena Deer Creek High School** will take a stand against the tobacco industry’s targeting of youth. Students will create a social media splash using the hashtag #NotAReplacement to tell big tobacco they refuse to “replace” dying smokers. Time: 12:30 PM. Location: Wadena Deer Creek High School, 600 Colfax Avenue S.W., Wadena. Contact: LeeAnn Huebsch (218) 632-8486.

The youth at **John Glenn Middle School** in **Maplewood** will participate in smoking and tobacco trivia, decorate post cards, and sign a pledge wall to be a smoke-free generation. Time: 9:30 AM. Location: John Glenn Middle School, 1560 E. County Road B, Maplewood. Contact: Chris Turner (334) 663-0767.

Students from **Jordan Secondary** will sign a pledge wall committing to be part of the first smoke-free generation. They will also chalk school sidewalks with facts about the toll of tobacco use and the tobacco industry’s marketing tactics, and provide fact-sheets on e-cigarettes and vaping. Time: 8 AM. Location: 600 Sunset Dive, Jordan. Contact: Sara Tabone (952) 492-4493.

On March 22, students from **John Glenn Middle School** will participate in a training session in **St. Paul** before walking to the **Capitol** to speak with legislators about raising the age limit on tobacco purchases. Time: 11:15 AM. Location: Minnesota History Center, 345 W. Kellogg Boulevard, St Paul. Contact: Chris Turner (334) 663-0767.

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