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**New York Kids to ‘Kick Butts’ on March 21**

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

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Kids in New York 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 New York, tobacco use claims 28,200 lives and costs $10.39 billion in health care bills each year. Currently, 4.3 percent of New York’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 New York, activities include:

Students at **Sagamore Middle School** in **Holtsville** will commit to a vape-free and smoke-free school community by constructing and signing a pledge wall. Time: 10:30 AM. Location: 57 Division Street, Holtsville. Contact: Lori Hewlett (631) 834-1198.

Students at **Vestal High School** in **Vestal** will commit to be tobacco-free and encourage peers and loved ones to quit smoking by constructing and signing a pledge wall. Time: 11:30 AM. Location: 205 Woodlawn Drive, Vestal. Contact: Melissa Restuccia (607) 757-2249.

Students at **Attica Central High School** in **Attica** will commit to be tobacco -free and encourage peers and loved ones to quit using tobacco products by constructing and signing a pledge wall. Time: 11:30 AM. Location: 3338 E. Main Street, Attica. Contact: Leigh Gill (585) 322-5079.

Students from **Advancing Tobacco-Free Communities Delaware, Otsego and Schoharie Counties,** in collaboration with **The State University of New York at Cobleskill**, will host a volleyball tournament where students will learn about the dangers of tobacco use and enjoy tobacco-free themed refreshments provided by the college’s Culinary Arts department. Parents and youth will commit to be tobacco-free by constructing and signing a pledge wall. Time: 11:30 AM. Location: 125 Schenectady Avenue, Cobleskill. Contact: Deyanira Cisneros (518) 560-9979.

Students at **Chazy Central Rural School** will commit to be tobacco-free and to encourage peers to stop using tobacco-products by constructing and signing a pledge wall. Time: 11:30 AM. Location: 609 Miner Farm Road, Chazy. Contact: Danielle O’Mara (315) 403-0909.

Students from the **Fashion Institute of Technology** in **New York** will hold an interactive “1 Day Stand” where students will learn about the dangers of tobacco use through games, trivia contests and educational displays, and build support for a tobacco-free campus. Time: 12 PM. Location: 227 W. 27th Street, New York. Contact: Gabriella Potievsky (212) 217-4195.

Students from **John S. Burke Catholic High School** in **Goshen** will displaycups in a fence in front of the school to demonstrate the deadly consequences of tobacco use and the tactics used by the tobacco industry to market their products. Time: 2:40 PM. Location: 80 Fletcher Street, Goshen. Contact: Makeda James (914) 671-9918.

Students from the **North Tonawanda Youth Center** will host an interactive carnival where kids will learn about the dangers of tobacco use through games, trivia contests and educational displays. Time: 4:30 PM. Location: 383 Vandervoort Street, North Tonawanda. Contact: Michelle Seider (716) 343-3208.

On March 22, students at **Waterloo Middle and High School** in **Waterloo** will educate their peers on the dangers of tobacco by constructing a graffiti wall featuring anti-tobacco facts and messages. Time: 10:30 AM. Location: 65 Center Street, Waterloo. Contact: Stephanie Gatesman (315) 719-4333.

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