**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 16, 2018**

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

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

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Kids in Tennessee 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 Tennessee, tobacco use claims 11,400 lives and costs $2.67 billion in health care bills each year. Currently, 11.5 percent of Tennessee’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 Tennessee, activities include:

On March 20, students at **Chuckey Doak Middle School** in **Afton** will participate in a tobacco education fair to learn about tobacco advertising, cigarette ingredients, smokeless tobacco, vaping, and lung function through interactive activities including jeopardy and a pledge wall. Time: 8:30 AM–1 PM. Location: Chuckey Doak Middle School, 120 Chuckey Doak Road, Afton. Contact: Lori Moore (423) 798-1749.

On March 20 and 21, the **Weakley County Health Department** will paint rocks with anti-tobacco messages and tobacco facts and hide them for citizens of Weakley County to find in a scavenger hunt. The community will be able to track the rocks on the Dresden TN Rocks and Weakley County Rocks Facebook pages, spreading the messages far and wide. Location: University of Tennessee at Martin, 554 University Street, Martin. Contact: Chelsea White (731) 468-4536.

The **Obion County Rise Above Peer Pressure (RAPP)** will host a “Tobacco Takedown” fair to educate at-risk youth about tobacco prevention. Activities include a cigarette butt clean-up, a tobacco trivia relay race, a pig lung demonstration, and much more. Time: 3–5 PM. Location: Boys & Girls Club of Union City, 1015 E. College Street, Union City. Contact: Catherine Sedergren (731) 468-4035.

Students from **Love Chapel Elementary School** will play in a kickball tournament to “kick tobacco” out of the community. **Teens Against Tobacco Use** and **TNSTRONG** members will present tobacco prevention facts. Time: 12–3 PM. Location: Love Chapel Elementary School, 600 S. Mohawk Drive, Erwin. Contact: Michelle McNabb (413) 220-7862.

The **Sullivan County Anti-Drug Coalition** in **Kingsport** will organize a poster contest, essay contest, and a rally with local law enforcement, tobacco educators, and others leaders from the community to promote tobacco prevention. Time: 11 AM-1 PM. Location: VO Dobbins Complex, Riverview Community Center, 301 Louis Street, Kingsport. Contact: Melony Ison (423) 742-1025.

**Power of Putnam** and **Thrive on Ambassadors** in **Cookeville** will conduct a cigarette butt clean up at **Tennessee Tech University** and inform university personnel and law enforcement where butts are found to increase enforcement of smoke-free campus rules. Time: 9 AM-12 PM. Location: Tennessee Tech University, 1 William L Jones Drive, Cookeville. Contact: Jennifer Matthews (731) 217-1299.

**Power of Putnam** will partner with **Upperman Middle School** in **Baxter** and Prescott Middle School in **Cookeville** to host all-day tobacco prevention fairs. Students will participate in poster and essay contests, learn about what’s really in a cigarette, sign a pledge wall to be part of the first tobacco-free generation, and more. Time: 8 AM–3 PM. Locations: Upperman Middle School, 6700 Nashville Highway, Baxter; Prescott Scott Middle School, 1859 S. Jefferson Avenue, Cookeville. Contact: Jennifer Matthews (731) 217-1299.

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