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

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

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

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Kids in Texas 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 Texas, tobacco use claims 28,000 lives and costs $8.85 billion in health care bills each year. Currently, 10.6 percent of Texas’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 Texas, activities include:

On March 20, student members of the **Gift of Life Youth Council** will speak in front of the **Beaumont City Council** about the profound dangers of tobacco and present an anti-tobacco proclamation. Time: 1:30 PM. Location: City Hall, 801 Main Street, Beaumont. Contact: Connie Berry (409) 658-5400.

On March 20, students at **Ricardo Junior High** will participate in tobacco-themed jeopardy competitions, make t-shirts, and listen to a keynote presentation on tobacco use by the **Costal Bend Wellness Foundation**. **Project Turnaround** mascot PETEY will also participate. Time: 7:55 AM. Location: 138 County Road 2160 W., Kingsville. Contact: Ryan Basaldu (361) 244-8962.

All eight branches of the **Boys and Girls Club of Fort Worth** will jointly host a Kick Butts Day carnival with games, food**,** and family-friendly fun alongside **Santa Fe Youth Services** and **Recovery Resource Council**. Time: 5 PM. Location: [2000 Ellis Avenue, Fort Worth](https://maps.google.com/?q=2000+Ellis+Ave,+Fort+Worth&entry=gmail&source=g). Contact: Renee Baptiste (817) 996-5013.

In partnership with the **City of Houston Mayor’s Office** and **Sanchez Charter School,** the **Association for the** **Advancement of Mexican Americans Learning Center** will host a three-on-three youth basketball tournament, and a keynote speaker will discuss the dangers of tobacco. Time: 4 PM. Location: 6001 Gulf Freeway, Houston. Contact: Adriana Dibello (832) 984-4447.

Students at **Center High School** will learn about tobacco’s health impacts with fun and educational activities, like using coffee stirrer straws to simulate how hard it is for smokers to breathe. Students will also sign a banner pledging to be smoke-free. Time: 11 AM. Location: 658 Rough Rider Drive, Center. Contact: Shelly Tole (936) 212-0371.

Members of the **Burkburnett Boys & Girls Club** are holding a cigarette butt cleanup of **Friendship Park** and surrounding areas. They’ll also sign an anti-tobacco pledge wall and learn about the harmful effects of tobacco use. Time: 4 PM. Location: 800 County Road, Burkburnett. Contact: Brittany Briscoe (940) 642-2865.

Youth in **Tyler** and **Smith Counties** will participate in a scavenger hunt with **NET Health,** collecting data on local retailers who sell tobacco. Kids will also share anti-tobacco messages on social media with special filters. Time: 12 PM. Location: 315 North Broadway, Tyler. Contact: Terrence Ates (903) 343-5451.

On March 24, sixth through twelfth grade students from **Angelina and Nacogdoches Counties** will meet at the **Lufkin ISD Administration Building** to participate in “The Amazing Race Against Tobacco” across downtown Lufkin, featuring tobacco-related clues. Time: 9:30 AM. Location: 101 Cotton Square, Lufkin. Contact: Kayla Garris (936) 634-9308.

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