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

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

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

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Kids in Vermont 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 Vermont, tobacco use claims 1,000 lives and costs $348 million in health care bills each year. Currently, 10.8 percent of Vermont’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 Vermont, activities include:

During the week of March 19, students from **Vermont Kids Against Tobacco** of **Riverside Middle School** will produce and display a photovoice project highlighting tobacco related issues in the community at the **Springfield Health Center**. Location: 100 River Street, Springfield. Contact: Beth Brothers (802) 885-4203.

On March 20, students of **Springfield High School** will host a community dialogue night at the **Nolin-Murray Center** where they will discuss strengths and concerns related to tobacco use they identified through a youth risk behavior survey. They will display the #BeTheFirst pledge wall and encourage the community to sign. Time: 6 PM. Location: 40 Summer Street, Springfield. Contact: Beth Brothers (802) 885-4203.

**Springfield High School** and **Riverside Middle School** students will encourage their classmates to sign a #BeTheFirst pledge wall during lunch with promotional giveaways and contests to spread awareness. Time: 12 PM. Location: 303 S. Street, Springfield. Contact: Beth Brothers (802) 885-4203.

Students from **Burlington High School** will create a “dirty laundry” display of tobacco industry quotes and statistics to highlight deceptive marketing tactics at the **Miller Community and Recreation Center**.Youth will collect messages of concern from students and community members about the influence of flavored tobacco. Time: 2:15 PM. Location: 130 Gosse Court, Burlington. Contact: Tara Holaday (802) 370-6829.

Students from **Danville High School** will create a “dirty laundry” display of tobacco industry quotes and statistics to highlight to raise awareness about deceptive marketing tactics. Youth will collect messages of concern from students and community members about the influence of flavored tobacco. Time: 8 AM. Location: 148 Peacham Road, Danville. Contact: Guy Pierce (802) 684-2292.

On March 21 and 26, students from **Bellows Falls Middle School** and **Bellows Falls High School**, respectively, will participate in a “chalk the walk” exercise, drawing quotes and statistics about the dangers of tobacco outside the school. Contact: Heather Waryas (802) 463-4366.

March 21: Time: 12:45 PM. Location: Bellows Falls Middle School, 8 Atkinson Street, Bellows Falls.

March 26: Time: 2:15 PM. Location: Bellows Falls High School, 15 School Street, Bellows Falls.

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