

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 15, 2019**

**CONTACTS: Gwendolyn Tom, (202) 868-4831  
Boot Bullwinkle, (202) 481-9343**

## **Kentucky Kids Will Kick Butts – and Juul – on March 20** *State Leaders Challenged to Fight Skyrocketing Epidemic of Youth E-Cigarette Use*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Kids in Kentucky will unite against tobacco use on March 20 as they join thousands of young people nationwide to mark Kick Butts Day, an annual day of youth activism organized by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids and sponsored in Kentucky by Interact for Health. More than 1,000 events are planned across the United States (see below for a list of local events).

This year, kids are focused on kicking Juul, the e-cigarette that has become enormously popular among youth across the country.

While cigarette smoking among high school students nationwide has fallen to 8.1 percent, e-cigarette use among high schoolers rose by an alarming 78 percent in 2018 alone – to 20.8 percent of the student population. In 2018, more than 3.6 million middle and high school students used e-cigarettes. U.S. public health leaders have called youth e-cigarette use an “epidemic” that is addicting a new generation of kids.

In Kentucky, 14.1 percent of high school students use e-cigarettes, while 14.3 percent smoke cigarettes. Tobacco use claims 8,900 lives in Kentucky and costs the state \$1.9 billion in health care bills each year.

On Kick Butts Day, youth and health advocates are calling for strong action to reverse the youth e-cigarette epidemic. In particular, they are calling on the Food and Drug Administration, states and cities to ban all flavored tobacco products, including e-cigarettes in flavors like cotton candy, gummy bear and mango that tempt kids. Other effective strategies to reduce youth tobacco use include laws raising the tobacco sale age to 21, significant tobacco tax increases, comprehensive smoke-free laws and well-funded tobacco prevention programs.

“This year on Kick Butts Day, we’re challenging policy makers at every level to do their part to reverse the youth e-cigarette epidemic and continue driving down youth tobacco use,” said Matthew L. Myers, President of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. “We cannot allow e-cigarettes, especially Juul, to addict another generation and reverse the enormous progress we’ve made in reducing youth tobacco use.”

Key facts about e-cigarettes include:

- The main cause of the youth e-cigarette epidemic is Juul, which looks like a computer flash drive, is small and easy to hide, delivers a powerful dose of nicotine, and comes in kid-friendly flavors like mango, fruit and mint. According to the manufacturer, each Juul “pod” (cartridge) delivers as much nicotine as a pack of 20 cigarettes.
- E-cigarettes pose serious health risks for kids. [The U.S. Surgeon General](#) has found that youth use of nicotine in any form – including e-cigarettes – is unsafe, causes addiction and can harm

the developing adolescent brain, affecting learning, memory and attention. Studies also show that young people who use e-cigarettes are more likely to become cigarette smokers.

On Kick Butts Day, youth join in creative events including signing pledges to be tobacco-free, learning about the harmful chemicals in tobacco products and organizing rallies at state capitols.

In Kentucky, activities include:

The **Kentucky Public Health Association** in **Bowling Green** will host a campus-wide Cigarette Butt Clean Up Day at Western Kentucky University for students to raise awareness on the effects of tobacco and help kick start an initiative to have a tobacco-free campus. Time: 10 AM. Location: Western Kentucky University, 1906 College Heights Boulevard, Bowling Green. Contact: Mackenzie Pennington (270) 505-5022.

Students from **Champions for a Drug-Free Lyon County** in **Eddyville** will hold a tobacco protest where they will create signs with tobacco-related death statistics and display shoes representing those who have died because of tobacco use. Time: 11:30 AM. Location: Lyon County High School, 209 W. Fairview Ave, Eddyville. Contact: Nancye Daniel (270) 625-0995.

At **Grant County High School** in **Florence**, youth will sign a pledge wall to be tobacco-free and write to policy makers to advocate for schools in Kentucky to be tobacco free. Time: 10 AM. Location: 7056 Burlington Pike, Florence. Contact: Camille Croweak (859) 907-4534.

**Boone County High School** students in **Florence** designed t-shirts and a snapchat filter to draw classmates' attentions to the dangers of tobacco. They will sign a postcard in support of the statewide tobacco-free schools bill and distribute informational brochures. Time: 7 AM. Location: Boone County High School, 7056 Burlington Pike, Florence. Contact: Abby Beausir (859) 835-8809.

Students at **Williamstown High School** in **Williamstown**, will wear self-designed Kick Butts Day t-shirts, sign a pledge to be tobacco-free and write postcards to legislators to advocate for tobacco-free schools in Kentucky. Time: 10 AM. Location: 300 Helton Road, Williamstown. Contact: Elizabeth Bishop (513) 289-8585.

On March 27, **Monroe County CARES** and the **CARES Youth Prevention Ambassadors** in **Tompkinsville** are taking a stand against tobacco and its deadly consequences by creating a powerful visual display to air out Big Tobacco's "dirty laundry" at the courthouse. Time: 10 AM. Location: Monroe County Courthouse, 200 N. Main St. Suite D, Tompkinsville. Contact: Kelli Smith (270) 427-1232.

All events will take place March 20 unless otherwise indicated. For a full list of Kick Butts Day activities in Kentucky, 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).