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Louisiana 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 Louisiana 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 sponsored by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. 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 Louisiana, 12.2 percent of high school students use e-cigarettes, while 12.3 percent smoke cigarettes. Tobacco use claims 7,200 lives in Louisiana 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.

In Louisiana, youth advocates are encouraging state lawmakers to pass a smoke-free law that would make all workplaces and public places smoke-free and protect everyone’s right to breathe clean air.

“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 Louisiana, activities include:

The **Louisiana Campaign for Tobacco-Free Living (TFL)** will host an informational panel and discussion in **Ruston** to educate the community about the effects of tobacco and vaping on youth. Speakers include: Mayor Ronny Walker; Dr. Alexander Billioux, Assistant Secretary of Health for Louisiana’s Office of Public Health; TFL director Tonia R. Moore; Alayna P. Tackett from the Oklahoma Tobacco Research Center; and local teenagers from the Next Era Youth Program. Time: 9:30 AM. Location: 1524 E. Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, Ruston. Contact: Liana Narcisse (504) 301-9853.

In Central Louisiana, students from 53 schools in seven school districts are participating in Kick Butts Day activities through funding by a Healthy Behaviors School District Partnership Grant from **The Rapides Foundation**. At the event in **Alexandria**, members of the student council at **Alexandria Middle Magnet School** will show their commitment to being smoke-free by spelling out an anti-tobacco message with cups in a fence and hosting a tombstone and cemetery tour. Time: 11 AM. Location: 122 Maryland Avenue, Alexandria. Contact: Shewanda Powell (318) 218-1848.

Students from **Pineville Junior High School** in **Pineville** will participate in a “No Smoking” poster contest to educate their peers about the dangers of smoking and encourage a smoke-free environment. Time: 10:45 AM. Location: 501 Edgewood Drive, Pineville. Contact: Melanie Deville (318) 447-7751.

The **Healthy Living Club** at **Montgomery High School** in **Montgomery** will host a Kick Butts Day kickball game to knock out tobacco in the community. Time: 2 PM. Location: 900 Harrison Drive, Montgomery. Contact: Erin Melton (318) 419-7168.

Westgate High School Next Era students will host a clean air picnic during lunch on the school’s campus in **New Iberia**. The picnic will include several games and activities to promote a smoke-free environment. Time: 10:40 AM. Location: 2305 Jefferson Island Road, New Iberia. Contact: Jennifer Kidd (337) 967-0861.

The **Healthy Living Club** at **Peabody Magnet High School** in **Alexandria** will commit to being tobacco-free and encouraging peers and loved ones to quit smoking by constructing and signing a pledge wall and participating in several anti-smoking games. Time: 11:22 AM. Location: 2727 Jones Avenue, Alexandria. Contact: Teri Mayeux (318) 794-2300.

The **Living Healthy Club** at **Avoyelles High School** in **Moreauville** will host a day of informational activities for students to promote a smoke-free campus and community. Activities include airing out Big Tobacco’s “dirty laundry” with a powerful visual display and writing facts about the dangers of smoking in chalk. Time: 11 AM. Location: 287 Main Street, Moreauville. Contact: Renee Bell (225) 978-6855.

Youth Summit Students from **Natchitoches Junior High** in **Natchitoches** will raise awareness about the dangers of smoking by hosting and participating in several activities, including a cigarette funeral, a relay race, and a balloon race. Time: 9 AM. Location: 1621 Welch Street, Natchitoches. Contact: Ververlon Holden (318) 238-0066.

All events will take place March 20 unless otherwise indicated. For a full list of Kick Butts Day activities in Louisiana, visit www.kickbuttsday.org/map. Additional information about tobacco, including state-by-state statistics, can be found at www.tobaccofreekids.org.

