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Mississippi 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 Mississippi 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 Mississippi, 10.3 percent of high school students use e-cigarettes, while 9.4 percent smoke cigarettes. Tobacco use claims 5,400 lives in Mississippi and costs the state \$1.2 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 Mississippi, youth advocates are urging state lawmakers to raise the cigarette tax by \$1.50 per pack.

“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 Mississippi, activities include:

Local youth in **Itta Bena** are taking a stand against tobacco. The **Boys & Girls Club of the Mississippi Delta Mississippi Valley State University Unit** will host an anti-tobacco rally where the public can learn about the dangers of smoking. Time: 4 PM. Location: 14000 Highway 82 West, Itta Bena. Contact: Linda Toy (662) 392-0601.

Community members from **Holmes County Consolidated School District** in **Lexington** will participate in a “Give the Boot to Butts” anti-smoking rally, hosted by the **Boys & Girls Clubs of the Mississippi Delta Lexington Unit**, to promote a smoke-free community. Participants and attendees are invited to wear their boots of choice while saying no to tobacco. Time: 4 PM. Location: 9479 Brozville Road, Lexington. Contact: Kawanna Horton (662) 739-1938.

The **Boys & Girls Club of the Mississippi Delta Greenwood Unit** in **Greenwood** will host a smoke-free movie night to educate children about the dangers of peer pressure and tobacco. Time: 3:30 PM. Location: 1740 Carrollton Avenue, Greenwood. Contact: Synthia Hoover (662) 392-3064.

The **GenFree Team** and **Leake County Youth Advocates**, the **Leake County Career and Technology Center** in **Carthage** will host a day of jeopardy games and prizes to raise awareness about the harmful effects of smoking. Time: 8 AM, 10 AM, and 12 PM. Location: 703 N. West Street, Carthage. Contact: Lynn McCafferty (662) 312-1549.

The **Boys & Girls Club of the Mississippi Delta Jonestown Unit** will display cups in fences around **Jonestown** to encourage a smoke-free environment. Time: 4:15 PM. Location: 330 Matagorda Road, Jonestown. Contact: Glenda Wade-Kamai (662) 590-5775.

The **Boys & Girls Club of Columbus** in **Columbus** will host a Zombie Walk to mobilize youth and young adults to take a public stand against the dangers of tobacco and vaping and promote changes to city-level protective ordinances. Time: 4:30 PM. Location: 1815 14th Avenue N., Columbus. Contact: Yolanda Pruitt (662) 251-7176.

The **Boys & Girls Club of the Mississippi Delta Yazoo City Unit** in **Yazoo City** will host a guest speaker to teach youth how to lead smoke-free lives. Additionally, local youth will participate in an educational poster content and bingo game. Time: 3 PM. Location: 516 East Canal Street, Yazoo City. Contact: Judy Ables (662) 763-8461.

The **Mississippi Tobacco-Free Coalition of Jackson County** will present on the harmful effects of smoking and Juuling to middle school students at **Vancleave Middle School**. To promote a smoke-free and vape-free environment, the youth advocates will also display educational posters, host a pig lung

demonstration, a straw breathing activity and construct a pledge wall. Time: 9:30 AM. Location: 4725 Bulldog Lane, Vancleave. Contact: Kristina Mullis (765) 265-9169.

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

