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New York 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 New York 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 New York, 27.4 percent of high school students use e-cigarettes, while 4.8 percent smoke cigarettes. Tobacco use claims 28,200 lives in New York and costs the state \$10.39 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 New York, youth advocates are urging state lawmakers to raise the tobacco sale age to 21 and supporting efforts to prohibit flavored tobacco products, including menthol cigarettes.

“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 New York, activities include:

On March 18, the **Clyde-Savannah Reality Check** group will host a cigarette butt pick-up at the **Galen Historical Society** and surrounding **Village Park**. Students will also take #NotAReplacement selfies for a collage that will be sent to state and local officials to show support for the first tobacco-free generation. Time: 3:30 PM. Location: 31 North Park Street, Clyde. Contact: Jessica Kenneda (585) 484-1503.

On March 19, students in the **Herkimer County Reality Check** group at **Dolgeville Central School** will write letters to their elected officials asking them to take a stand against Big Tobacco. Time: 12:15 PM. Location: 38 Slawson Street, Dolgeville. Contact: Rachel Johnson (518) 258-7137.

Students at the **Greater Ithaca Activities Center** will celebrate Kick Butts Day with the **Cayuga Center for Healthy Living**, the **Tompkins County Health Department** and the **Cortland County Reality Check** program by viewing interactive displays that reinforce the importance of saying NO to tobacco products and e-cigarettes. An assembly will follow where students will showcase what they have learned about tobacco and nicotine. Students will also sign a pledge banner, watch student and staff performances, and more. Time: 3:15 PM. Location: 301 W. Court Street, Ithaca. Contact: Kathy Eliason (607) 280-1866.

Students from **John S. Burke High School Reality Check** in **Goshen** will be chalking the walkway outside of the high school to raise awareness of tobacco in their local community. Educators, students and local elected officials have been invited to attend. Time: 2:30 PM. Location: 80 Fletcher Street, Goshen. Contact: Carissa Mazzeo (347) 325-2094.

Students and community members in **Massena** will walk through the town, starting at the **Horizons Youth Clubhouse**, to learn about how tobacco and vaping products impact the local parks, playgrounds, and beaches where children and pets play. The event will feature giveaways, food, hot chocolate, and numerous “candy land” themed games for youth and adults. Time: 4 PM. Location: 56 Main Street, Massena. Contact: Joey Boswell (210) 776-5339.

Youth at **Gilboa-Conesville Central School**, with support from **Students Against Destructive Decisions** and **Family, Career and Community Leaders of America** will commit to be tobacco-free and encourage peers and loved ones to quit smoking by constructing and signing a pledge wall during lunch periods. Time: 11:15 AM. Location: 132 Wyckoff Road, Gilboa. Contact: Michelle Fleischman (607) 588-7541.

Students at **Afton Middle & High School** will celebrate Kick Butts Day by signing a “Be The First” pledge banner. The school will also display blackened and diseased pig lungs to illustrate the dangerous impact of tobacco on health. Additional schools in the county will participate in this activity with **The Chenango County Health Department** throughout the year. Time: 11 AM. Location: 29 Academy Street, Afton. Contact: Christina Arnold (607) 427-8212.

Middle school students at **Ernie Davis Academy** in **Elmira** will commit to being tobacco-free and encourage their peers and loved ones to quit smoking by constructing and signing a pledge wall. Time: 10:15 AM. Location: 933 Hoffman Street, Elmira. Contact: Sarah Robbins (607) 857-3825.

Students at **Lake Placid High School** will commit to being tobacco-free and encourage their peers and loved ones to quit smoking by constructing and signing a pledge wall. Educational materials about nicotine and vaping will also be distributed to students. Time: 10:30 AM. Location: 34 School Street, Lake Placid. Contact: Tina Clark (518) 524-5739.

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

