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Ohio 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 Ohio 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 Ohio 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 Ohio, 15.1 percent of high schoolers still smoke cigarettes. Tobacco use claims 20,200 lives in Ohio and costs the state \$5.6 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 Ohio, activities include:

Students from **Marion L. Steele High School** in **Amherst** will celebrate Kick Butts Day by dressing up as zombies to represent the number of people who have died from tobacco. They will also hold an interactive lunch event where kids will learn about the dangers of tobacco, nicotine and vaping products through educational displays and a #BeTheFirst pledge wall. Time: 10:45 AM. Location: 40 Washington Street, Amherst. Contact: Kim Haney (440) 387-3611.

Youth from **Richland County**, in partnership with the **Community Action for Capable Youth (CACY)**, will create two large murals featuring anti-tobacco messaging and healthy alternatives to cigarette use. The banners will travel and be displayed at several school and community agencies, including **Crestview Middle School**. Time: 10 AM. Location: Crestview Middle School, 1575 OH-96, Ashland. Contact: Brandy Marquette (419) 774-5683.

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

