

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 15, 2019**  
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## **Tennessee 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 Tennessee 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 Tennessee, 11.5 percent of high school students use e-cigarettes, while 9.4 percent smoke cigarettes. Tobacco use claims 11,400 lives in Tennessee and costs the state \$2.7 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 Tennessee, activities include:

On March 16, the youth coalition of **Carter County Drug Prevention in Elizabethton** will host a kickball tournament to promote awareness around the dangers of tobacco. Youth will fill out nametags stating what they want to be instead of tobacco users, and facts about Big Tobacco will be shared over a loudspeaker between games. Time: 11 AM. Location: Elizabethton Parks & Recreation Department, 300 W. Mill Street, Elizabethton. Contact: Jilian Reece (423) 342-8008.

On March 19, students from **Westview High School in Martin** will hold a Pledge Day, signing a pledge banner to not use tobacco and creating chalk designs outside the school with anti-tobacco slogans and tobacco facts. Time: 11 AM. Location: Westview High School, 8161 Highway 45 South, Martin. Contact: Tkaira Davis (731) 819-8230.

On March 19, students from **Dresden High School in Dresden** will hold a Pledge Day, signing a pledge banner to not use tobacco and creating chalk designs outside the school with anti-tobacco slogans and tobacco facts. Time: 3 PM. Location: Dresden High School, 7150 TN-22, Dresden. Contact: Tkaira Davis (731) 819-8230.

Youth from **H.O.P.E. in Kingsport** will lead a "Zombie Walk" rally in which participants will be dressed as zombies and carry multiple signs with anti-tobacco slogans. Time: 4 PM. Location: 316 Broad Street, Kingsport. Contact: Chaiba Bloomer (423) 276-6541.

Youth with **South Central Kingsport Community Development, Inc., New Vision Youth Group, Healthy Kingsport, and the Sullivan Anti-Drug Coalition in Kingsport** will participate in an event with the theme "Don't Vape, Keep In Shape!" The event will feature presentations by New Vision Youth, elected officials, and Sullivan County Regional Health Department staff on the health risks of tobacco and e-cigarettes/juuling. Time: 4 PM. Location: Riverview Community Room, 301 Louis Street, Kingsport. Contact: Johnnie Mae Swagerty (423) 429-7553.

Youth with the **Roane County Anti-Drug Coalition in Kingston** will participate in an event at the Living Room Arcade to promote knowledge about the dangers of tobacco use. Time: 6 PM. Location: Living Room Arcade, 518 N. Roane Street, Harriman. Contact: Nathan Wray (865) 454-2401.

Students from **East Elementary School in Humboldt** will use donated shoes and line them along the walls of the school with signs that read "these shoes represent the number of people that will die from a tobacco-related illness while you are at lunch." The school will then donate the shoes to a local charity after the event. Time: 8 AM. Location: East Elementary School, 1560 North 30<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Humboldt. Contact: Jordan Fondren (731) 784-7170.

Students from **Westview High School in Martin** and **Dresden High School in Dresden** will go to Festival Park and the Martin Recreational Complex after school to pick up littered cigarette butts. Time: 3 PM. Location: Festival Park, 400 S. Lindell Street, Martin. Contact: Tkaira Davis (731) 819-8230.

On March 22, students from **Lewis County Middle School** in **Hohenwald** will host a “Teen Safe Night” featuring a presentation on e-cigarettes and vaping products, as well as games to promote an end to tobacco use. Time: 10 AM. Location: Lewis County Middle School, 206 South Court, Hohenwald. Contact: Terry Whittenberg (931) 796-2375.

On March 25, youth from the **Obion County Prevention Coalition** in **Union City** will partner with the local Health Department, a local non-profit and elected officials to pick up cigarette butts around local parks and downtown. Time: 3:30 PM. Location: 306 S. First Street, Union City. Contact: Carla Aaron (731) 446-8879.

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