

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 15, 2019

**CONTACTS: Camille Ahearn, (202) 868-4827
Boot Bullwinkle, (202) 481-9343**

Texas 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 Texas 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 Texas, 10.3 percent of high school students use e-cigarettes, while 7.4 percent smoke cigarettes. Tobacco use claims 28,000 lives in Texas and costs the state \$8.85 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 Texas, youth advocates are urging lawmakers to pass legislation to raise the tobacco sale age to 21.

“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 Texas, activities include:

On March 19, student leaders at the **Lewis Career and Technical High School** in **Houston** will educate and empower the student body to say NO to tobacco and vaping at a campus-wide event featuring anti-vaping public service announcements (PSAs), performances in the outdoor amphitheater and educational banners and displays. The students are advocating for stricter regulations around vape and e-cigarette use. Time: 10 AM. Location: 1348 Genoa Red Bluff Road, Houston. Contact: Andrea Nguyen (832) 930-2847.

Students from **Little Elm High School** will display preserved pig lungs to illustrate the damage that smoking causes to healthy lungs. Additionally, students will share startling facts about e-cigarette use on campus. Time: 11 AM. Location: 1900 Walker Lane, Little Elm. Contact: Chelsea Nicoli (817) 938-1689.

Students from the **Boys & Girls Club of Greater Tarrant County** in **Fort Worth** will celebrate Kick Butts Day with a tobacco prevention carnival. Kids will learn about the dangers of tobacco and how it harms the body while participating in carnival games. Time: 4 PM. Location: 3123 Avenue G, Fort Worth. Contact: Iriann Alonso Rodriguez (682) 556-0267.

Students from the **Peer Advocates for Wellness (PAWS)** and **#SaveYourBreath (Truth Initiative)** groups at the **Texas Southern University Student Center** in **Houston** 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 AM. Location: Samuel Nabrit Science Building, Room 19, 3501 Wheeler Avenue, Houston. Contact: Kimberly Pounds (281) 808-3113.

On March 22, students at **Saint Joseph Academy** in **Brownsville** will celebrate “Tobacco Prevention Day.” Students will hear from a pulmonologist and a faculty/student panel at a school-wide assembly, participate in science lessons explaining the effects of tobacco use, create tobacco prevention posters, and hold a rally during final period. Time: 2:10 PM. Location: 101 Saint Joseph Drive, Brownsville. Contact: Vilma Wolfe (956) 551-5844.

On March 23, students and parents from **Bryan High School** will celebrate Kick Butts Day at **Tanglewood Park** with an interactive health and safety event to educate the community about the dangers of tobacco use through games, guest speakers from the **Bryan Police and Fire Department**, and educational displays. Time: 11 AM. Location: 3901 Carter Creek Parkway, Bryan. Contact: Sergio Umanzor (979) 422-6097.

On March 23, **Say What** student groups in **Angelina County** will celebrate Kick Butts Day with a community “Color Out Tobacco” obstacle course to promote a tobacco- and vape-free lifestyle. The event will take place at the **Boys & Girls Club**, and attendees will receive prizes and free swag. Time: 10 AM. Location: 909 S. Angelina Avenue, Lufkin. Contact: Carolina Lopez (936) 634-9308.

On March 30, the **Wichita Falls-Wichita County Public Health District** will celebrate Kick Butts Day with an interactive health fair where kids will learn about the dangers of tobacco use through games, trivia contests educational displays. Time: 9 AM. Location: 1700 3rd Street, Wichita Falls. Contact: Amanda Kennedy (940) 867-9661.

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

