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CONTACTS: Lili Kadets, (202) 868-4832

Boot Bullwinkle, (202) 481-9343

Vermont 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 Vermont 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 Vermont, 12 percent of high school students use e-cigarettes, while 9.3 percent smoke cigarettes. Tobacco use claims 1,000 lives in Vermont and costs the state \$348 million 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 Vermont, youth advocates are urging state 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 Vermont, activities include:

Youth from the **Above the Influence** group at **Burlington High School** will create a high-impact visual display that the community can use to start conversations about flavored tobacco. Students will cover up tobacco industry quotations and tobacco facts with a message of their own, supporting a tobacco-free Vermont. Time: 11:40 AM. Location: 52 Institute Road, Burlington. Contact: Tara Rueckert (802) 370-6829.

Students at **North Country Union High School** in **Newport** will commit to being tobacco-free and to encourage peers and loved ones to quit smoking by constructing and signing a pledge wall. Time: 10:45 AM. Location: 209 Veterans Avenue, Newport. Contact: Tina Tarryk (828) 280-6491.

In conjunction with **BE Above BTV** and **Burlington Partnership for a Healthy Community**, students at **Hunt Middle School** in **Burlington** will promote a smoke-free environment by constructing and signing a pledge wall. Students will also submit entries to the #ISpyALie photo competition to call attention to harmful and problematic advertising of tobacco, e-cigarettes and alcohol products. Time: 2:15 PM. Location: 130 Gosse Court, Burlington. Contact: Jessica Summer (828) 612-3899.

To celebrate Kick Butts Day, members of the **Youth to Youth** group at **Brattleboro Union High School** will host an educational lunch event to raise awareness about the dangers of smoking. Time: 11:35 AM. Location: 131 Fairground Road, Brattleboro. Contact: Hanako Jones (802) 451-3400.

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