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FLORIDA YOUTH WORK TOWARDS A TOBACCO FREE FUTURE

SWAT Members Are Fighting Back During Kick Butts Day



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Tallahassee, Fla.—Florida’s Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT) are speaking up and taking action against the tobacco industry for the 21st annual Kick Butts Day on March 16. This national day of activism, sponsored by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, empowers youth to fight back against Big Tobacco.

“We are fortunate to have such an impressive group of energetic and talented young people dedicated to fighting Big Tobacco,” said Interim State Surgeon General Dr. Celeste Philip. “As we mark Kick Butts Day, we celebrate the efforts of Florida’s SWAT chapters and encourage them to continue their life-saving work in all 67 counties across the state.”

Not only are more smokers quitting, every day, about 1,300 people in the United States die because of smoking.¹ In response, the tobacco companies target a new generation of potential customers. A 1984 internal document from R.J. Reynolds’, the makers of Camel, stated: “Younger adult smokers are the only source of replacement smokers... If younger adults turn away from smoking, the industry must decline, just as a population which does not give birth will eventually dwindle.”²

Youth and young adults rarely consider the long-term health consequences of smoking when they start. Because of nicotine, a highly addictive drug, three out of four youth smokers continue smoking well into adulthood, often with serious and even deadly consequences.³ In fact, about half of long-term smokers die prematurely from smoking-related causes.⁴

If current smoking rates continue, 5.6 million U.S. children who are currently younger than 18 years of age will eventually die prematurely as a result of smoking.⁵ Most concerning, almost all initiation of daily tobacco use begins by the age of 18.⁶

SWAT aims to empower, educate and equip Florida youth to revolt against Big Tobacco. SWAT is a movement of empowered youth working together to de-glamorize tobacco use. Their efforts aim to shape tobacco-free norms, make tobacco less desirable, less acceptable and less accessible.

About Kick Butts Day

Kick Butts Day is a national day of activism that empowers youth to stand out, speak up and seize control against Big Tobacco. Kick Butts Day is organized by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. The first Kick Butts Day was held in 1996.

About Tobacco Free Florida

The department's Tobacco Free Florida campaign is a statewide cessation and prevention campaign funded by Florida's tobacco settlement fund. Tobacco users interested in quitting are encouraged to use one of the state's three ways to quit. Since 2007, more than 137,000 Floridians have successfully quit, using one of these free services. To learn more about Tobacco Free Florida and the state's free quit resources, visit www.tobaccofreeflorida.com or follow the campaign on Facebook at www.facebook.com/TobaccoFreeFlorida or on Twitter at www.twitter.com/tobaccofreefla.

About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Health Consequences of Smoking —50 Years of Progress: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2014

² R.J. Reynolds report, "Younger Adult Smokers: Strategies and Opportunities." February 29, 1984 .Bates No. 501928462-8550

³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Preventing Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2012.

⁴ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Preventing Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2012.

⁵ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Health Consequences of Smoking —50 Years of Progress: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2014.

⁶ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Preventing Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2012.