

For Immediate Release

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From: The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

MICHIGAN KIDS 'KICK BUTTS' ON APRIL 13

Kids Urge State Leaders to Support Tobacco Prevention Initiatives

It is the 10th anniversary of Annual Kick Butts day in the U.S. This is the day for kids around the country to stand up and speak out against the dangers of tobacco and the harm it does to adults and youth alike. Youth can send a powerful message on Kick Butts Day to the tobacco industry to stop targeting them with advertising and that they want elected leaders to do more to protect them from tobacco.

In Michigan, 27.6 percent of high school students smoke, and 29,900 kids become daily smokers every year. Every year, tobacco use kills 14,700 residents and costs the state \$2.65 billion in health care bills. Nationally, tobacco use kills more than 400,000 people and costs the nation more than \$75 billion in health care costs each year.

In Michigan, tobacco companies spend \$393.8 million a year to market their products, while the state spends no money on tobacco prevention programs that protect kids from tobacco. Much of this tobacco marketing occurs in venues such as magazines and convenience stores that are effective at influencing kids to smoke.

On Kick Butts Day, kids turn the tables on Big Tobacco with events that range from mock-funerals for the Marlboro Man to rallies at state capitols to surveys of tobacco advertising. Despite recent progress in reducing smoking levels in Michigan youth, data suggests that our tri-county area still isn't heeding the message. **The most recent data for shows:**

- **One in four pregnant moms in our tri-county area report smoking during their pregnancy.** (Are we starting out with the right message?)
- **One in 3 Michigan high school seniors reported smoking everyday** in the latest Youth Risk Behavior Survey
- **20% of Michigan kids who smoke report starting at age 10 or younger (Youth Risk Behavior Survey-2003)**

If these figures aren't enough to show that we need to kick a few butts around here, than there will never be one. By the way, we don't have to wait until April 13 – so watch your you-know-what.