

Children's Health

Helping Kids Kick Butts

(NAPSA)—America's youth are taking a stand against the number one preventable cause of death in the United States—tobacco use.

One way is through Kick Butts Day, an annual event sponsored by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. The National Chairperson of Kick Butts Day is Olympic swimmer Natalie Coughlin, who won two gold medals and five medals overall at the 2004 Athens Olympics.

Every year, tens of thousands of young people participate in more than 1,500 events designed to raise awareness about the tobacco problem and what can be done about it. Activities include memorials for those who lost their lives to tobacco, mock trials for Mr. Butts and marches on state capitals to urge elected officials to take action to reduce tobacco use.

Kick Butts Day is also a time to celebrate the progress we've made in reducing youth smoking and the important role youth leaders have played. Since 1997, when youth smoking rates reached an all-time-high, our nation has reduced smoking rates among high school students by 40 percent (from 36.4 percent in 1997 to 21.9 percent in 2003).

Health advocates say this progress is the result of more states and communities implementing policies proven to reduce tobacco use, including higher tobacco taxes, smoke-free workplaces and public places, and well-funded tobacco prevention programs.



Kick Butts Day brings youth together to take a stand against tobacco use.

There is more work to be done. One in five high school students still smoke and another 2,000 kids become regular smokers every day. Smoking still kills more than 400,000 people in the U.S. every year.

"Kids are a powerful part of the solution to reducing tobacco use," said Matthew L. Myers, president of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. "Kids who participate in Kick Butts Day send two important messages: They want the tobacco industry to stop targeting them with advertising and they want elected leaders at all levels to do more to protect them from tobacco."

The Washington, D.C.-based Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids is a nonprofit organization that works to prevent kids from smoking, help smokers quit and protect everyone from secondhand smoke. For more information, visit www.kickbuttsday.org or www.tobaccofreekids.org.