



Kids Can Be Powerful Voices In The Fight Against Tobacco

(NAPSA)—Thousands of kids across America will have a chance to tell Big Tobacco how they really feel by taking part in events planned for Kick Butts Day on April 2, 2003.

With events that range from mock funerals for the Marlboro Man to rallies at state capitals, kids have asked the tobacco industry to stop targeting them with advertising and asked elected officials to do more to protect them from tobacco.

Many people say the tobacco industry remains a threat to kids and continues to market its addictive products to youth. Earlier this year, the Federal Trade Commission reported a 42 percent increase in tobacco marketing expenditures in the two years following the industry's 1998 promise (as part of the tobacco settlement agreement) to stop marketing to kids.

According to the FTC report, the tobacco industry spends \$9.6 billion a year—\$26 million a day—to market its products, much of this increase directed toward magazines popular with kids and convenience stores kids visit.

Another government study shows how effectively tobacco marketing reaches kids. Nearly 90 percent of kids who smoke use the three most heavily advertised brands, Philip Morris' Marlboro, R.J. Reynolds' Camel and Lorillard's Newport.

“On Kick Butts Day, kids are standing up against the tobacco companies, and it's important that elected officials across the country stand with them by supporting proven tobacco preven-



On Kick Butts Day, kids take their turns as leaders in the fight against tobacco.

tion measures,” said Matthew L. Myers, president of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, which sponsors Kick Butts Day. “States that have increased cigarette taxes and funded comprehensive prevention programs have dramatically cut smoking among kids and adults, saved lives by reducing lung cancer and heart disease, and saved millions of dollars in health care costs. Even in these difficult times, tobacco prevention is a good investment for kids and taxpayers.”

Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of death in the United States, killing more than 400,000 Americans every year. Ninety percent of smokers start at or before the age of 18.

More information about Kick Butts Day, including a state-by-state list of activities, is available online at www.kickbuttsday.org. Information about tobacco's deadly toll can be found at www.tobaccofreekids.org.