

Oregon kids 'kick butts' on March 28

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

Events Spotlight Deadly Chemicals in Cigarettes, Urge Elected Officials to Take Action to Curb Tobacco Use

Kids across Oregon will rally against tobacco on March 28 as they join thousands of young people nationwide for the twelfth annual Kick Butts Day, sponsored by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. More than 2,000 events are planned across the nation.

This year, Kick Butts Day is raising awareness about the thousands of chemicals in each puff of cigarette smoke and the need for elected officials at all levels to step up the fight to reduce smoking and other tobacco use.

Cigarette smoke contains more than 4,000 chemicals, including at least 69 that cause cancer and many more that are hazardous. But a new poll released by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids finds that most Americans are not aware of the dangerous chemicals in cigarettes and cigarette smoke. The poll, conducted March 7-11, found that 71 percent of adults and 79 percent of teens could not name any of the chemicals found in cigarette smoke, other than tar and nicotine. Detailed poll results can be found at <http://tobaccofreekids.org/pdf/2007poll.pdf>

Chemicals in cigarette smoke include arsenic (used in rat poison, causes cancer in humans), ammonia (used in household cleaners, can irritate the respiratory tract and elevate blood pressure), formaldehyde (used to embalm bodies, causes nasal cancer and can damage the lungs, skin and digestive system), and polonium 210 (a highly radioactive element that causes cancer). To raise awareness about these and other hazardous chemicals in cigarettes, the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids has launched a new web site -- <http://www.whatareyousmoking.org/>.

This year, health advocates are urging Congress to pass legislation granting the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authority to regulate tobacco products. Among other things, the FDA could require that tobacco companies disclose the contents of tobacco products and remove harmful ingredients; crack down on tobacco marketing and sales to kids; and stop tobacco companies from misleading the public about the health risks of their products.

U.S. Senator Gordon Smith is a co-sponsor of the legislation, but U.S. Senator Ron Wyden is not.

"It is inexcusable that tobacco products, the number one preventable cause of death in America, are one of the least regulated products sold in America," said Matthew L. Myers, President of the Campaign for

Tobacco-Free Kids. "By granting the FDA authority to regulate tobacco products, Congress can stop the tobacco industry from targeting our children and misleading the public. We hope Kick Butts Day will inspire elected leaders across the nation to support effective measures to protect children and save lives."

At the state level, health advocates are urging governors and legislators to adopt proven measures to reduce tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke, including higher tobacco taxes, smoke-free workplace laws, and well-funded programs to prevent kids from smoking and help smokers quit.

Nationwide, tobacco use kills more than 400,000 people and costs more than \$96 billion in health care bills each year, and 23 percent of high school students smoke. In Oregon, tobacco use kills 5,410 residents and costs the state \$1.1 billion in health care bills a year, and 17 percent of high school students smoke.

Kick Butts Day comes as the tobacco industry is spending record amounts to market its deadly products. According to the Federal Trade Commission, the tobacco companies spend more than \$15.4 billion a year to market their products in the U.S. -- that's \$42 million a day. In Oregon, tobacco companies spend \$163 million a year to market their products.

On Kick Butts Day, kids turn the tables on Big Tobacco with events that range from "They put WHAT in a cigarette?" demonstrations to mock-funerals for the Marlboro Man to rallies at state capitols. Activities in Oregon, all scheduled for March 28, include:

At the Friendship Park in Madras, the Youth Development Team from Jefferson County Middle School will write and display powerful messages about tobacco's toll on them and their loved ones when they erect a Memorial Wall. Time: 2 p.m. Location: SW 4th Street, Madras. Contact: Danna Hastings (541) 475-4456.

In Portland, there is an event at Little Angel's Child Care. More info is available at (503) 653-9037.

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