



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH &
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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TAKE NOTICE: NATIONAL KICK BUTTS DAY

SEVERAL STATE AGENCIES AIM TO REDUCE YOUTH TOBACCO SALES AND CONSUMPTION

NASHVILLE - The Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities (TDMHDD) along with the Tennessee Department of Health, the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, and the Tennessee Attorney General's Office, will highlight National Kick Butts Day Wednesday, March 24, 2010. Groups in Tennessee will host and participate in more than 40 events across the state with a focus on reducing access to tobacco to children under the age of 18.

The Tennessee Youth Prevention Work Group, comprised of staff from these four state agencies, has been working over the past year to educate and remind Tennessee tobacco retailers of both the health and legal risks associated with selling tobacco to minors. Without sufficient success, Tennessee stands to lose important prevention and treatment dollars in Tennessee due to the Synar Amendment, a federal regulation covering youth access to tobacco laws.

"Kick Butts Day is a great day to remind tobacco retailers not to sell cigarettes to youth as it can lead to a lifetime of smoking addiction," said TDMHDD Commissioner Virginia Trotter Betts. "Research has shown that the younger an individual starts smoking the stronger the addiction, By only selling tobacco products to customers over 18, tobacco merchants help ensure that Tennessee complies with the law, reduces the overall number of youth smokers, and continues to receive these needed funds."

Facts from www.tobaccofreekids.org about Tennessee youth and tobacco:

- Most individuals with an addiction to cigarettes started smoking before they turned 18 years old.
- Tennesseans under the age of 18 will purchase and consume over 19.3 million packs of cigarettes this year.
- Approximately 7,100 young people in Tennessee become new youth smokers each year.
- Approximately 412,000 of today's Tennessee children will become smokers and nearly 132,000 of them will die prematurely from tobacco related causes.

"Our best advice to Tennesseans of any age is to never start smoking," said Health Commissioner Susan R. Cooper, MSN, RN. "For those who do smoke, we urge you to contact your health provider to talk about ways to quit, and to take advantage of the free Tennessee Tobacco QuitLine counseling service for added support. This service is available to both teens and adults in Tennessee."

(MORE)

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The Tennessee Tobacco QuitLine, 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-800-784-8669), is a statewide, free tobacco cessation treatment program made possible through the Department of Health. There is no charge to callers for services, and callers have unlimited access to a quit coach through the QuitLine. Call to learn more about the QuitLine or visit the Web site at <http://health.state.tn.us/tobaccoquitline.htm>.

Kick Butts Day is a national event sponsored by the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids that works to engage thousands of children and youth nationwide and around the world through a day of activism against tobacco use. For more information on Kick Butts Day, or to find a list of events in your area, please visit <http://kickbuttsday.org/>. For more facts and information about Tennessee or other states, please visit <http://www.tobaccofreekids.org>.