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## **SEMINOLE COUNTY YOUTH WORK TOWARDS A TOBACCO FREE FUTURE** *SWAT Members Are Fighting Back During Kick Butts Day*



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**Sanford, Fla.** – Seminole County’s Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT) are speaking up and taking action against the tobacco industry for the 21<sup>st</sup> annual Kick Butts Day on March 16. This national day of activism, sponsored by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, empowers youth to fight back against Big Tobacco.

SWAT students from Lake Howell High school will create and disseminate signage throughout the facility to inform classmates about Kick Butts Day.

“Kick Butts Day is more than an observance day. It is a tool of change,” said Victoria Galvan, student at Seminole High School and Youth Advocacy Board Statewide Chair. “As a student, I have seen its effects and they are amazing.”

Every day, about 1,300 people in the United States die because of smoking. In response, the tobacco companies target a new generation of potential customers. A 1984 internal document from R.J. Reynolds’, the makers of Camel, stated: “Younger adult smokers are the only source of replacement smokers. If younger adults turn away from smoking, the industry must decline, just as a population which does not give birth will eventually dwindle.”

Youth and young adults rarely consider the long-term health consequences of smoking when they start. Because of nicotine, a highly addictive drug, three out of four youth smokers continue smoking well into adulthood, often with serious and even deadly consequences. In fact, about half of long-term smokers die prematurely from smoking-related causes.

“Kick Butts Day is a national day of activism that empowers youth to stand out, speak up and seize control against Big Tobacco,” said Dr. Swannie Jett, Health Officer for DOH-Seminole. “Smoking harms nearly every organ of the body, causing many diseases and affecting the health of smokers in general. Quitting smoking has immediate as well as long-term benefits for you and your loved ones.”

If current smoking rates continue, 5.6 million U.S. children who are currently younger than 18 years of age will eventually die prematurely as a result of smoking. Most concerning, almost all initiation of daily tobacco use begins by the age of 18.

SWAT aims to empower, educate and equip Florida youth to revolt against Big Tobacco. SWAT is a movement of empowered youth working together to de-glamorize tobacco use. Their efforts aim to shape tobacco-free norms, make tobacco less desirable, less acceptable and less accessible.

For more information, please visit [www.tobaccofreeflorida.com](http://www.tobaccofreeflorida.com).

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