



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 17, 2011

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Arizona Youth Plan Activities for Kick Butts Day *National Kick Butts Day March 23, 2011*

PHOENIX — Young people from Arizona are joining thousands of kids around the country to take part in the 16th annual Kick Butts Day (KBD) on Wednesday, March 23, 2011. This national day of activism empowers youth to speak up and take action against tobacco in their communities.

Across Arizona, middle and high school students are planning KBD events that include school presentations, community demonstrations, and even some FlashMobs that will feature the chant of “Stop Addiction. You Take Control. Venomocity.com”

Nationally, every day approximately 4,000 teens try smoking; of those, more than 1,000 become daily cigarette smokers. Although Arizona’s smoking rate remains the seventh lowest in the nation, teen smoking remains a great concern with more than one out of five Arizona teens lighting up.

“Many teenagers perceive smoking as a temporary activity, one that they will stop in a year or two. The reality, however, is that they find themselves addicted,” said Wayne Tormala, Chief for the Arizona Department of Health Services Bureau of Tobacco and Chronic Disease. In fact, 63 percent of high school smokers say they want to quit. While only three percent think they will still be smoking in five years, studies show that about 60 percent of them will still be smoking seven to nine years after high school. The vast majority of adult chronic smokers were smoking when they were nineteen years old.

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Leadership for a Healthy Arizona

“While most teen campaigns in the past have focused on health impacts and the vanity issues of smoking, our in-depth research with teen audiences revealed that forfeiting control to addiction is a more relevant angle with teens today. While teens easily recited the impacts of smoking, the consequences of getting addicted to nicotine and becoming a smoker for life were perceived as far removed from their immediate lives,” Tormala said.

“It is critical that we continue to work locally and with our national partners to participate in important awareness days like “Kick Butts Day,” Tormala added. “Preventing tobacco use now not only saves lives, but also brings enormous economic relief, as we are all paying for the enormous burden of health care costs incurred by people who are lifelong tobacco users.”

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About Kick Butts Day

Kick Butts Day is a national day of activism that empowers youth to speak out, stand up and seize control against Big Tobacco. KBD was developed sixteen years ago by Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids which is a leading force nationally in the fight to reduce tobacco use and its deadly toll in the United States and around the world. More than 1,000 events will take place nationally on March 23, 2011. More information at www.kickbuttsday.org

About Venomocity: Brought to you by addiction the tobacco prevention campaign that harnesses the realities of tobacco addiction for an audience age 12 to 17 years-old. Components of the campaign consist of television and radio commercials, local events, social media and the website www.venomocity.com

About Wayne Tormala

Dedicating his entire career to human service, Wayne has provided leadership at the local, national and global levels in programs addressing issues of public health, mental illness, the environment, world hunger, poverty, and economic justice. Currently, he is the Bureau Chief for the Bureau of Tobacco and Chronic Disease at the Arizona Department of Health Services where he oversees all aspects of tobacco prevention/cessation programming and the prevention/management of chronic diseases, including diabetes, heart disease, cancer, lung disease, stroke, asthma, and lung disease.