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For Immediate Release

### **Kick Butts Day 2011**

Centerville, MI The 16<sup>th</sup> annual Kick Butts Day is scheduled for March 23, 2011. Coordinated by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, Kick Butts Day is a national day of activism that empowers youth to speak up and take action against tobacco use at more than 1,000 events from coast to coast.

To celebrate Kick Butts Day The Tobacco Reduction Action Coalition (TRAC) will be attending "Unlocking the Future" at the St. Joseph County ISD. Dr. Patrick Rowley, Center for Brain Balance of Kalamazoo will talk about how to help children improve connectivity within the brain and thus improve learning.

Tobacco use continues to be the number one cause of preventable death in Michigan, killing over 14,000 Michigan residents each year. Over 18,000 Michigan kids become smokers each year, and 300,000 kids alive today in Michigan will ultimately die from smoking cigarettes. In addition to cigarettes and traditional spit tobacco, there are numerous other forms of new and emerging tobacco and non-tobacco nicotine products available on the market today. The tobacco industry markets these products as an alternative to smoking cigarettes, and portrays the products as less harmful than smoking cigarettes. However, there is no evidence indicating these new products are any safer. Quitting tobacco use or addiction to nicotine is one of the best steps that people can take to improve their health.

According to Kelley Mapes, TRAC Coordinator, "The most challenging aspect of these new products is their appeal to young people. The packaging, advertising, and flavors of these products are very difficult to distinguish from candy. Kids can begin a lifetime of addiction to nicotine with these products, and be at risk for all of the health issues associated with tobacco use. Kick Butts Day is a great time to raise awareness among parents and kids that these products are not a safe alternative to smoking cigarettes."

"Kids are a powerful part of the solution to reducing youth tobacco use," said Matthew L. Myers, president of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. "For Kick Butts Day 2011, kids are sending two important messages: they want the tobacco industry to stop targeting them with advertising and they want elected leaders at all levels to do more to protect them from tobacco."

The Washington, DC-based Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids is one of the largest non-governmental education and advocacy initiatives ever undertaken to decrease youth tobacco use in the United States. Tobacco-Free Kids strives to build a healthier future for our children by reducing tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke.

For more information on the results of the community scan contact Kelley Mapes, TRAC Coordinator at 517-279-9561 ext. 103. For help in quitting tobacco use, talk with your healthcare provider or contact the Michigan Tobacco Quitline at 1-800-784-8669. For more information about Kick Butts Day visit [www.kickbuttsday.org](http://www.kickbuttsday.org) .

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