



Charlie Crist  
Governor

Ana M. Viamonte Ros, M.D., M.P.H.  
State Surgeon General

**For Immediate Release**  
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**Contact: Marne Cothran**  
**Phone: 941-624-7200 extension 7261**  
**Email: [marne\\_cothran@doh.state.fl.us](mailto:marne_cothran@doh.state.fl.us)**



## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **Tobacco Free Florida and Charlotte County Health Department Participate In "Through With Chew Week"**

**Port Charlotte (FL)** – With over 13% of Charlotte County high school students reporting using smokeless tobacco products in the past month, Tobacco Free Florida and Charlotte County Health Department remind people of the dangers of smokeless tobacco, by participating in "Through With Chew Week", February 20 – February 26. "Through With Chew Week" is designed to raise awareness of the dangers of smokeless/spit tobacco, prevent people from starting to use, and encourage users to quit.

Even though smokeless tobacco use can lead to nicotine addiction and dependence, many youth are unaware of these dangerous consequences. Widely available in a variety of flavors appealing to youth such as cool mint, vanilla and chocolate chip cookie dough, smokeless tobacco is not a safe alternative to cigarettes. Many believe that "smokeless" means harmless, but in fact, it contains 28 cancer-causing agents that could lead to oral cancer and gum disease. People who use smokeless tobacco are 50 times more likely to get cancer of the cheek and gums. According to the Centers for Disease Control, oral cancer is the sixth-leading cancer in males and one of the most difficult types of cancer to diagnose, treat and cure.

Recently the Charlotte County Health Department and Drug Free Charlotte County sponsored a "Sweet Tobacco Don't Be Fooled" poster contest for students within Charlotte County Public Schools. Students learned about the dangers of candy flavored tobacco products including flavored smokeless tobacco currently for sale in our community. The students then created a poster to educate others. Winning posters were displayed at the Charlotte County Fair.

Student Working Against Tobacco (SWAT) has worked with the Charlotte Stone Crabs this past season to educate children and adults about the dangers of smokeless tobacco "Don't Strike Out with Chew." While smokeless tobacco is banned in minor league baseball, there is no ban in major league. Individual players and management of the Tampa Bay Rays are in support of a ban.

Tobacco Free Florida launched a new website dedicated to smokeless tobacco. This site, [www.SmokelessKills.com](http://www.SmokelessKills.com), is designed to expose the dangers of smokeless tobacco with hard-hitting statistics and graphic images.

For help quitting tobacco, contact the Florida Quitline at 1.877.U.CAN.NOW or [floridaquitline.com](http://floridaquitline.com) for free counseling and nicotine replacement therapies.

Visit the Charlotte County Health Department Website for additional tobacco information and resources:  
[www.CharlotteCHD.com](http://www.CharlotteCHD.com)

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