



Rick Scott  
Governor

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**NEWS RELEASE**

**Charlotte County Health Department Helps Raise Awareness of  
Candy-Flavored Tobacco Products for Kick Butts Day 2011**

**– Kick Butts Day 2011 is March 23 –**

**Port Charlotte (FL)** – The Charlotte County Health Department, Drug Free Charlotte County and Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT), Charlotte County Tobacco Free Partnership and Tobacco Free Florida are joining the fight against candy-flavored tobacco products as part of Kick Butts Day 2011, a national day of activism that empowers youth to speak up and take action against Big Tobacco.

Studies of youth expectations around flavored tobacco products, have found that young smokers report choosing flavored products over cigarettes because they “taste better” and are perceived to be “safer.” In observance of Kick Butts Day on March 23, SWAT wants community members to know the truth about candy-flavored tobacco products – that they are as addictive and carry similar health risks as regular tobacco products.

“We know that the tobacco industry is spending a lot to advertise these candy-flavored products that we see at convenience stores around our schools and neighborhoods,” said Krista Coxey, a Peer Educator with DFCC. “We want to inform other kids that these products are just as dangerous and addictive as cigarettes.”

In celebration of Kick Butts Day, Students Working Against Tobacco will be conducting a cigarette litter beach clean up at the March 19, 2011 Kayak and Wildlife Festival at Port Charlotte Beach Park. The area to be cleaned will then be used for children’s activities later in the day. They will also have an information booth to raise awareness about the dangers of flavored tobacco products.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) states that in 2004 a study found that 22.8 percent of 17-year-old smokers reported using flavored cigarettes over the past month – compared to just 6.7 percent of smokers over the age of 25.

In September 2009, an FDA ban on flavored cigarettes went into effect under the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act. Menthol cigarettes and flavored tobacco products other than cigarettes were exempted from the ban. One result of the FDA ban has been the proliferation of flavored cigars, cigarillos, and smokeless tobacco products including grape flavored cigars, berry flavored spit tobacco and mint flavored Snus. The FDA is currently examining options to regulate these products.

A poll conducted in March 2008 found that one in five youth between the ages of 12 and 17 had seen flavored tobacco products or ads, while only one in 10 adults reported having seen them. Young people



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are much more likely to use flavored tobacco products than adults, and tobacco industry documents show that companies have designed flavored products with kids in mind.

“We want to increase parental awareness about the dangers of trying these products,” said Mary Kay Burns, Charlotte County Health Department Interim Administrator. “Candy and fruit flavors mask the bad taste of tobacco, making it easier for kids to start using tobacco products. Once they start using one tobacco product they are more likely to experiment with others. 80% of tobacco users started before they were 18 years old so we encourage parents to talk to their children before they start.”

**Tobacco Free Florida offers a number of free resources to help tobacco users quit.**

- Phone: Call the Florida Quitline at 1-877-U-CAN-NOW to speak with a Quit Coach who will help assess the user’s addiction and create a personalized quit plan.
- Online: Enroll in online counseling with the Florida Quitline, where each user can create a personalized, web-based quit plan. Visit <https://www.quitnow.net/florida> to enroll.
- In-person: Visit the Florida Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) Network’s website, <http://ahectobacco.com>, to sign up for Quit Smoking Now group classes.

**About Tobacco Free Florida**

Tobacco Free Florida (TFF) is a statewide cessation and prevention campaign funded by Florida’s tobacco settlement fund. The program is managed by the Florida Department of Health, specifically the Bureau of Tobacco Prevention Program. TFF’s mission is to combat the pervasive problem of tobacco use in the Sunshine State, where each year, more than 28,000 Floridians die from smoking and tobacco-related diseases cost the state an estimated \$19.6 billion in healthcare costs and lost productivity.

Since its inception in February 2008, TFF has reached millions of Floridians through advertising, grassroots initiatives, social media, and public relations efforts as a means of providing information and offer resources to help tobacco users quit. Smokers and smokeless tobacco users interested in quitting are encouraged to call the Florida Quitline at 1-877-U-CAN-NOW to speak with a quit coach. To learn about TFF and the state’s free quit smoking resources, visit [www.tobaccofreeflorida.com](http://www.tobaccofreeflorida.com) or follow the campaign on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/TobaccoFreeFlorida> or Twitter at [twitter.com/tobaccofreefla](http://twitter.com/tobaccofreefla).

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

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