

March 7, 2014



## 'Kick Butts Day' on March 19

*Sarasota County's Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT) Chapter raises awareness locally and nationwide*

SARASOTA COUNTY - Tobacco use remains the leading cause of preventable death in Americans today. Sarasota County's Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT) is fighting back and raising awareness of the tactics used every day by cigarette manufacturers to find new smokers. Organized by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids and sponsored by the United Health Foundation, Kick Butts Day is a national day of activism that empowers youths to fight back against Big Tobacco.

In observance of Kick Butts Day, four Sarasota County high schools are hosting presentations by Patrick "Pac Man" Perez. A youth motivational speaker, Perez combines a mix of creativity, energy and education to help students understand the tactics used by Big Tobacco to target youths through retail advertising placement and flavored tobacco products. Presentations will be held on Monday, March 17, at 8:30 a.m. at North Port High and at 11:40 a.m. at Venice High School. On Tuesday, March 18, there will be presentations at 9:20 a.m. at Riverview High School and at 12:10 p.m. at Pine View School.

"These presentations will raise the awareness of hundreds of students throughout Sarasota County regarding the dangers of tobacco use," said Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County Tobacco Prevention Specialist Hilary Woodcum. "Every day in Florida, 88 people will die from a tobacco-related illness. Big Tobacco is going after our youths, looking for 'replacement' smokers, but Sarasota County's SWAT students are standing up against these companies and educating their peers."

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**Youth motivational speaker Patrick "Pac Man" Perez will visit four high schools to help students understand the tactics used by tobacco companies to target youths through retail advertising placement and flavored tobacco products**

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In addition to local events, students from Pine View School are celebrating national recognition as the 2014 Kick Butts Day Public Service Announcement (PSA) Contest winners, selected by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. Their winning PSA, titled "The Science behind a Cigarette," was selected as first-place winner of the contest, putting Florida's youth tobacco-prevention efforts and Sarasota County on the map.

"Making this video helped us learn how many harmful ingredients are in tobacco products. I feel strongly about this topic and am excited that I had the opportunity to share this video with a large audience," said the film's co-creator and Ninth-Grade Student President of Pine View School's SWAT Club, Jonah Mundy.

The PSA was written, created and edited by SWAT students at Pine View School. It can be viewed online by following the link: [http://youtu.be/aWKFgWdM\\_OU](http://youtu.be/aWKFgWdM_OU). Other winners include "Cigarette Dissection" by Lely High School SWAT in Naples, FL.

The Florida Department of Health's Tobacco Free Florida campaign is a statewide cessation and prevention campaign funded by Florida's tobacco settlement fund. Tobacco Free Florida offers a number of free and convenient resources to help smokers quit.

- Telephone: Call the Florida Quitline at 1-877-U-CAN-NOW to speak with a quit coach who will help you assess your addiction and help you create a personalized quit plan.
- Online: Enroll in the Web Coach®, which will help you create your own web-based quit plan that's right for you; visit <https://www.quitnow.net/florida>.
- In-person: Visit the Gulfcoast Area Health Education Center (AHEC) website, [www.gsahec.org](http://www.gsahec.org), to locate additional Quit Smoking Now group classes. Its local toll-free tobacco referral line is 866-534-7909. The Florida Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) Network's website is [www.ahectobacco.com](http://www.ahectobacco.com).

You can also follow the campaign on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/TobaccoFreeFlorida](http://www.facebook.com/TobaccoFreeFlorida) or Twitter at [www.twitter.com/tobaccofreefla](http://www.twitter.com/tobaccofreefla).

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