



## NEWS RELEASE Mobile County Health Department

**March 22, 2010**

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Kick Butts Day is Wednesday**

Members of Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT) will gather in Cathedral Square this Wednesday, March 24, from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m. in recognition of national Kick Butts Day.

While there, SWAT members will display a Memorial Wall of the Toll of Tobacco in Mobile and form a human billboard illustrating the impact of secondhand smoke.

Cathy Clothier, SWAT coordinator, says the organization's mission is to prevent youth use of tobacco and to protect young people from exposure to secondhand smoke.

"Because strong public smoking bans will reduce youth use of tobacco by as much as 40 percent and also protect teens working in smoky environments," she says, "SWAT students have been working with the Coalition for a Tobacco-Free Mobile County to encourage area city councils to pass ordinances banning public smoking."

SWAT members are determined to see the city of Mobile join Citronelle, Bayou La Batre, Prichard, and Saraland in banning smoking in public places, she says.

"As a matter of fact, the location of this year's Kick Butts Day observance was chosen to show SWAT's appreciation of the downtown restaurants and bars that have gone smoke-free," Clothier says.

According to Clothier, more than 10,500 kids under 18 in Alabama will become new regular smokers this year; and approximately 174,000 of those under 18 who now smoke will die prematurely because of their smoking. To help combat this, she says, SWAT members serve as peer educators in elementary and middle schools. They address health-related tobacco issues, advocacy issues, and tactics of the tobacco industry.

Now in its eighth year, SWAT has grown to include groups at Bryant, Davidson, LeFlore, and Murphy high schools, and Phillips Preparatory School, and has more than 150 members. Last year, SWAT members made 90 presentations that reached 10,208 students in grades 4-8 at 42 schools. SWAT is funded by the Alabama Department of Public Health, Safe and Drug-Free Schools, and the DeBakey Foundation.

Kick Butts Day was developed by the National Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids and is sponsored by 100 major partners.

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