



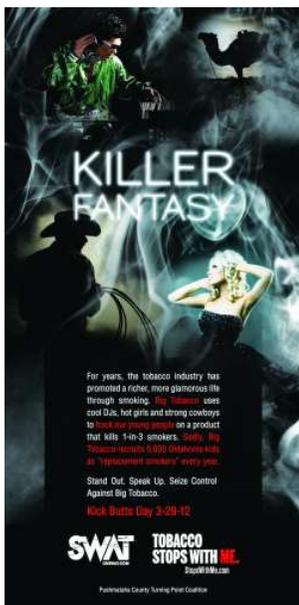
## Pushmataha youth will speak out against big tobacco on Kick Butts Day

March 22, 2012

An Oklahoma teen becomes addicted to tobacco every 95 minutes, due in large part to the tobacco industry's decades-long practice of targeting young people through crafty advertising.

More than 90 percent of surveyed tobacco users said they started as teenagers, and the state figures mirror national findings released this month in a U.S. Surgeon's General report on tobacco use among youths and young adults.

Surgeon General Regina Benjamin started her report summary with a blunt conclusion: "Nearly all tobacco use begins during youth and young adulthood."



But on Kick Butts Day, scheduled this year on March 29, youth in Pushmataha County and throughout the nation will speak out against Big Tobacco and its tactics for gathering "replacements" for the people who quit, or die from tobacco-related disease, every year. Activities on Kick Butts Day will aim to educate youths on the deceptive marketing practices of the tobacco industry. More than 1,000 events will occur nationwide, including the Pushmataha Youth Demonstration that will be held at the red light on main street in front of First Bank at 2:00 pm.

"Young voices are strong in Pushmataha County and they are increasingly saying, 'no more' to the tobacco companies that try to manipulate them," said Jerry Speck. "As adults who share their determination to make our communities better places to live, we stand with these youth and will help them as they challenge Big Tobacco."

According to the U.S. Surgeon General's landmark report released on March 8, more than 3,800 youths under the age of 18 start smoking every day across the nation. More than 1,200 people in this country die each day due to smoking, it states, and almost 90 percent of those replacement smokers try their first cigarette by age 18.

The report points out the tobacco industry's assertion that it only promotes brand choices among adult smokers. Regardless of stated intent, this marketing encourages youths to smoke. More than 80 percent of underage smokers choose brands from among the top three most heavily advertised, according to the surgeon general.

For more information about national Kick Butts Day, please visit [www.kickbuttsday.org](http://www.kickbuttsday.org). To learn more local tobacco education-related activities, contact Wendy DeWitt at the Pushmataha Health Department at 580-298-6624. About