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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Seize Control on Kick Butts Day, March 23

BERGEN COUNTY, NJ—The Bergen County Department of Health Services, in cooperation with the Bergen County Cancer Coalition, encourages youth and their parents to participate in Kick Butts Day, Wednesday, March 23. Originally developed in 1995 by The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, the focus of Kick Butts Day is to mobilize America's youth to stand out, speak up and seize control against big tobacco.

The tobacco industry spends over \$12.8 billion dollars a year, more than \$35 million a day, on advertising and marketing to attract new customers, particularly youth. Each year two million tobacco users either quit or die from using tobacco products. To make up for these losses, the tobacco industry recruits youth as "replacement customers."

Each day about 3500 youth under 18 try smoking for the first time. Nicotine is responsible for getting and keeping people addicted to their products. Adolescents' bodies are more sensitive to nicotine and they are more easily addicted than adults. This helps to explain why the tobacco industry uses advertising that results in more than 1000 youth addicted every day. One in three of them will die prematurely because of tobacco use.

In addition, the tobacco industry continues to develop advertisements intended for adults but using imagery which appeals to the needs and desires of adolescents. These advertisements are featured in magazines that have a large youth readership. The tobacco industry also creates marketing campaigns that promote new lines of cigarettes and smokeless tobacco products developed to attract youth. According to the Campaign for Tobacco Kids, evidence has consistently shown that youth prefer to smoke the brands that tobacco companies spend the most money marketing.

Despite the influence of television, the internet and movies, parents are the greatest influence on their children. Parents can talk to their children about the tobacco industry's strategy to recruit youth through advertisements that make the tobacco user look glamorous, healthy, rugged and "cool." Parents can help their children "read between the lines" and understand the false messages the tobacco industry is trying to send them.

Student Assistance Counselors, school nurses, health teachers and student peer leadership groups are encouraged to get youth involved in activities promoting Kick Butts Day at their respective schools. For suggestions on initiatives, visit www.kickbuttsday.org and review The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids Activity Guide.

The Bergen County Cancer Coalition's Oral/Tobacco/Lung Cancer work group has been conducting tobacco control initiatives focusing on tobacco use, the number one cause of preventable death and disease in the United States. For more information on Kick Butts Day, call the Coordinator of the Bergen County Cancer Coalition at 201-634-2707. The Bergen County Cancer Coalition is funded through a grant from the New Jersey Department of Health & Senior Services' Office of Cancer Control and Prevention (OCCP). For more information on Comprehensive Cancer Control in New Jersey, please visit: www.njcancer.gov.