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Youth Stand Up to Big Tobacco on Kick Butts Day

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Three area schools want to stand up, speak out, and seize control against Big Tobacco. Oshkosh West High School, Winneconne Middle School, and Neenah High School are using the power of the T-shirt to promote youth advocacy against Big Tobacco companies as part of Kick Butts Day (March 25), a national day of youth empowerment sponsored by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids.

Students created the designs for the shirts after learning all the tactics Big Tobacco uses to get kids to buy their products. They are now using their own words and sales against them by wearing their shirts on Wednesday to educate and engage other youth in the fight.

" Oshkosh West's students chose to focus on how Big Tobacco doesn't care about how many people they kill: "We really need something for people to die of." -British American Tobacco, 1987. (Yes, a tobacco company actually said this). Tobacco kills about 8000 people in Wisconsin every year, and another 1200 die from diseases related to second-hand smoke.

" Winneconne Middle chose to not be a target for Tobacco's advertising money: "I am not a target of Big Tobacco. They are wasting their \$276 million. I won't fall for their dirty tricks." Tobacco companies spend \$276 million on advertising each year in Wisconsin. Only \$15 million is allotted to fund the State's Tobacco Prevention and Control Program.

" Neenah High is playing the numbers game with select students wearing shirts with a number like 20% or 400,000. Only about 20% (1 out of 5) high school students in Wisconsin smoke. 400,000 people die annually in the US. 400,000 kids under 18 also start smoking each year. Several students also created a public service announcement for their school. It can be viewed at <http://moodle.neenah.k12.wi.us/groups/wnhs/blog>

The Tobacco-Free & Drug-Free Communities Coalition of Winnebago County teaches kids that most adults and kids don't smoke and that Big Tobacco is marketing specifically to them. But, that message is much more effective when it comes from their peers. Additional information on Kick Butts Day can be found at <http://kickbuttsday.org/>



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