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ESCAMBIA COUNTY YOUTH PARTICIPATE IN STATEWIDE OBSERVANCE TO COMBAT YOUTH E-CIGARETTE USE

Students Working Against Tobacco Set Oct. 17 as 'Not A Lab Rat Day'

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Pensacola, Fla. – Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT), Florida's statewide youth-led movement to combat the tobacco industry, announced the first-ever statewide observance to tackle youth electronic cigarette use. This year on Oct. 17, Not A Lab Rat Day will empower youth to stand up to the e-cigarette industry and declare that they are not "Lab Rats" for use in discovering the harms and addictiveness of these products.

SWAT chapters across the state will hold events at their schools and communities during the week of Oct. 17 to dispel myths and educate their peers about e-cigarettes and other electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS). Participants in Not A Lab Rat Day events will be encouraged to complete statement cards stating that they will not be "lab rats" for the e-cigarette industry. Youth will mail out their statements to headquarters of major e-cigarette companies to show their refusal to accept industry tactics.

In Escambia County, Florida, the SWAT chapter(s) will host/participate in 'Not A Lab Rat' awareness activities both in school and actively on social media. Students will use creative graphics to grab the attention of their peers and begin conversations about the hazardous nature of ENDS.

Some common myths about e-cigarettes are that they do not contain nicotine, that they are less addictive than conventional cigarettes, and that they are completely harmless.

The fact is that most e-cigarettes do contain nicotine. Nicotine is highly addictive and can harm adolescent brain development, which continues into an individual's mid-20s. Additionally, e-cigarette aerosol is not harmless. It can contain harmful and potentially harmful substances, including heavy metals like lead, volatile organic compounds, and cancer-causing agents. Scientists are still learning about the long-term health effects of e-cigarettes.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently declared e-cigarette use among teens a national "epidemic of addiction." In Florida, the youth (ages 11-17) rate of current e-cigarette use increased 60.2 percent in just one year – from 9.8 percent in 2017 to 15.7 percent in 2018.

"Many of my peers have been influenced by false or misleading information about e-cigarettes," said Sachit Gali, Statewide Chair of SWAT. "Teaching youth the truth about e-cigarettes can prevent a lifetime of nicotine dependence and unknown health effects."

Young people's use of nicotine in any form is unsafe, can cause addiction and can harm the developing adolescent brain, according to the 2016 U. S. Surgeon General's Report on E-cigarette Use Among Youth and Young Adults.

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About Not A Lab Rat Day

Not A Lab Rat Day will be observed annually on the third Wednesday of October to bring awareness to e-cigarette use among youth, encourage youth to stand up against Big Tobacco and the e-cigarette industry, and to push for change within their communities.

About Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT)

SWAT is Florida's statewide youth organization working to mobilize, educate and equip Florida youth to revolt against and de-glamorize Big Tobacco and the e-cigarette industry. SWAT is a united movement of empowered youth working towards a tobacco free future.

To learn more about Students Working Against Tobacco, visit www.swatflorida.com or follow us on Instagram at [@swatflorida](https://www.instagram.com/swatflorida) and on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/swatflorida).

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