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**Adults Underestimate Tobacco Advertising in Local Stores  
*But Acknowledge That Ads Influence Kids***

**Ithaca, N.Y. (March 23, 2011)** – An informal survey conducted in Ithaca earlier this month finds that adults significantly underestimate the extent of tobacco product advertising in stores that sell cigarettes, while recognizing that such advertising does have an influence on children. As part of the annual Kick Butts Day, the survey was conducted by Tobacco Free Tompkins to see if local consumers are aware of the targeted marketing and its impressions on youth.

The survey found:

- 93 percent of people surveyed said that when they visit a convenience store, supermarket or gas station, they observe 10 or fewer cigarette ads. In fact, a statewide study conducted for the New York State Department of Health in 2007 found an average of 18 ads per store.
- 86 percent of people surveyed believed tobacco advertising influences children ‘somewhat’ or ‘a lot’. Only 14 percent thought tobacco advertising had little or no effect on children.

Research has found that weekly or more frequent exposure to retail tobacco marketing is associated with a 50 percent increase in the odds that adolescents will ever smoke. Stores are one of the last venues where tobacco advertising reaches youth. Ads on TV, radio and billboards are banned, as well as cartoon characters, sponsorships and giveaways. Magazine advertising is restricted to predominantly adult-oriented publications. However, in-store advertising, promotions and product displays remain unrestricted.

An observational study reported by Tobacco Free Tompkins in November found that 75 percent of Tompkins County stores that sell tobacco contain signs or other tobacco product advertising and 90 percent display tobacco products behind or near the cash register, the most prominent location in the store. In this survey, 93 percent of adults questioned said they see tobacco advertising in stores and 68 percent notice products displayed behind the counter “most of the time” or “always.”

Tobacco companies spend billions each year to market their deadly products in convenience stores, grocery stores and pharmacies. Of the \$12.5 billion spent nationally by cigarette companies on overall promotions in 2006, 90 percent was spent on point of sale advertisements, price discounts, promotional allowances, or special deals such as buy-one-get-one-free offers. . National marketing data shows that 75 percent of teenagers shop in a convenience store at least once a week.

“These findings indicate that adults are aware of the impact of tobacco advertising but underestimate how much of it kids are exposed to every time they walk into a convenience store,” said Erin James of Tobacco Free Tompkins. “Tobacco advertising and tobacco product displays are just a different form of commercial messaging, and as adults get a better understanding about the influence this marketing has on youth smoking I think they will demand that stores change their policies.”

The survey was conducted by Tobacco Free Tompkins prior to a local sporting event the evening of March 4, 2011. While not a statistically valid sample, the findings provide a snapshot of knowledge and attitudes among adults in the community. Full results of the four question survey are available [below](#).

Sponsored by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, Kick Butts Day is an annual celebration of youth leadership and activism in the fight against tobacco use. Kids are sending two powerful messages on Kick Butts Day: They want the tobacco companies to stop targeting them with marketing for cigarettes and other tobacco products, and they want elected leaders to do more to protect them from tobacco.

Tobacco use is the number one cause of preventable death in the United States, killing more than 400,000 people and costing \$96 billion in health care bills each year. While the nation has made significant progress in reducing youth smoking, 20 percent of high school students still smoke.

In New York, tobacco use claims 25,400 lives and costs \$8.17 billion in health care bills each year. Currently, 14.8 percent of the state’s high school students smoke, and 24,100 kids become new daily smokers each year.

## Results of survey about attitudes and knowledge about tobacco marketing in retail stores conducted in Tompkins County, N.Y.

| Conducted March 4, 2011 among 57 adults prior to a local sporting event.  |         |             |       |
|---|---------|-------------|-------|
|   | Smokers | Non-smokers | Total |
| 1. When you go to a convenience store, supermarket or gas station, how many tobacco product ads do you see?   |         |             |       |
| Never go  | 0       | 2           |       |
| 1-5   | 4       | 37          |       |
| 6-10  | 0       | 10          |       |
| 11-15   | 0       | 2           |       |
| 15 or more  | 0       | 0           |       |
|   |         |             | 55    |
| 2. When you go to a convenience store, supermarket or gas station, how often do you see tobacco products displayed behind the counter?                |         |             |       |
| Never go  | 0       | 0           |       |
| Never see   | 2       | 0           |       |
| Rarely see  | 0       | 2           |       |
| Sometimes see   | 0       | 13          |       |
| Most of the time  | 2       | 17          |       |
| Always see  | 0       | 20          |       |
|   |         |             | 56    |
| 3. When you go to a convenience store, supermarket or gas station, how often do you see tobacco products near candy, toys, or youth related products? |         |             |       |
| Never go  | 0       | 2           |       |
| Never see   | 2       | 7           |       |
| Rarely see  | 0       | 19          |       |
| Sometimes see   | 2       | 16          |       |
| Most of the time  | 0       | 4           |       |
| Always see  | 0       | 4           |       |
|   |         |             | 56    |
| 4. How much do you think tobacco advertising in general influences children?  |         |             |       |
| Not at all  | 0       | 0           |       |
| A little  | 0       | 8           |       |
| Somewhat  | 2       | 28          |       |
| A lot   | 2       | 17          |       |
|   |         |             | 57    |