



Charlie Crist
Governor

Ana M. Viamonte Ros, M.D., M.P.H.
State Surgeon General

PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

April 6, 2009

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jeannine Mallory,
Public Information Officer
Pinellas County Health Department
727-824-6908 (media only)

Mariana Leslie
Pinellas County SWAT Coordinator
(727) 347-6133 x 1408

Hosted by Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT)
Tenth Annual "Sandblast" Event Saturday, April 18

Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT) will hold the tenth annual SWAT Sandblast in Pinellas County Saturday, April 18 at Treasure Island Beach, 11260 Gulf Boulevard.

SWAT is a youth-led organization that teaches about the manipulation and marketing efforts of the tobacco industry. The SWAT Sandblast is one way SWAT gets its message out to teens. While students enjoy volleyball, rock wall climbing, a water slide, tug-of-war and other games, SWAT leaders will educate participants on tobacco facts and the ways Big Tobacco targets teens. Sandblast participants will receive free gear with the Anti-Big Tobacco message – much in the same way tobacco companies give away free items to promote their products.

Registration for the event will begin at 10:00 a.m. and the event will end at 3:30 p.m. Sandblast is free to youth in middle school and high school, and is co-sponsored by the City of St. Petersburg's TASCOS group and the Pinellas County Health Department.

SWAT is active in Florida, with successful chapters in Hillsborough and Pinellas County Schools. SWAT battles Big Tobacco through grassroots efforts to prevent teen smoking and spread a constant message that tobacco kills 88 people a day in Florida and is the only consumer product that kills half of its users. Every day, more than 4,000 kids try their first cigarette; another 1,000 kids become addicted smokers – one-third of whom will die prematurely as a result. In 2006, the rate of tobacco dropped to an all-time low of 8.9 percent of middle and high school students reporting they'd used tobacco in the last 30 days (*Data from the 2006 Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey*).

For more information, contact Mariana Leslie, Pinellas County SWAT Coordinator, at (727)347-6133 x 1408, mleslie@lungfla.org.

###