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Not A Lab Rat Day Exposes How History is Repeating Itself When It Comes to Vaping

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St. Lucie County, Fla. — The second annual *Not A Lab Rat Day* is Wednesday, October 16. This year, Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT) wants other teens to know that when it comes to e-cigarettes, aka “vaping” products, history is repeating itself.

E-cigarette companies use the same tricks, including flavors and marketing campaigns, tobacco companies used for decades to target and recruit young smokers.¹ Not a surprise considering Big Tobacco companies own or have significantly invested in e-cigarette companies.^{2,3} These are the same tobacco companies that for decades lied about the addictiveness and health effects of cigarettes.⁴

SWAT is Florida’s youth-led movement to combat Big Tobacco. *Not A Lab Rat Day* is a statewide initiative that empowers youth to stand up and declare that they refuse to be the tobacco and e-cigarette industry’s “lab rats” as we wait and see the long-term health effects of vaping.

SWAT chapters across the state are holding events at their schools and in their communities to dispel myths and educate their peers about the e-cigarette industry’s connection to Big Tobacco. In St. Lucie County, the SWAT chapter and school clubs will be conducting a multitude of activities such as; Not a Lab Rat social media countdown campaign for the week of the 16th on @stlucieswat, creating a #FACT wall at one of the St. Lucie County High Schools, and conducting an interactive presentation at one of St. Lucie County Middle Schools.

Here are the facts:

- Marlboro cigarette maker Altria purchased a 35% stake in JUUL for \$12.8 billion in December 2018.⁵
- Imperial Brands, the makers of Winston and Kool, owns the e-cigarette brand Blu.⁶
- RJ. Reynolds (RJR), the makers of Newport and Camel, owns the e-cigarette brand Vuse.⁷

“The tobacco and e-cig industry swears they aren’t targeting us, but their marketing, fake claims, and 15,500 flavors (and counting) show otherwise,” said Lisbet Figueroa,

one of the SWAT leads at the County Chapter. "SWAT has a voice, and we are here to end the deception and take back our generation."

Youth vaping has increased dramatically across the country, including right here in St. Lucie County. E-cigarette companies claim their products are intended for adults, but alarming rates among teens tell a different story. About 25% of Florida high school students are vaping⁸ compared to 4% of Florida adults.⁹

Participants in *Not A Lab Rat Day* events will complete placards stating that they will not be "lab rats." SWAT plans to send placards collected statewide to the headquarters of major e-cigarette companies.

For more information, visit swatflorida.com/not-a-lab-rat/.

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).

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¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. E-Cigarette Use Among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General—Executive Summary. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2016.

² Kirkham, Chris. "Altria to Buy \$12.8 Billion Minority Stake in E-cigarette Company Juul." Reuters. 20 Dec. 2018. www.reuters.com/article/us-juul-altriagroup-m-a/altria-to-buy-12-8-billion-minority-stake-in-e-cigarette-company-juul-idUSKCN1OJ1JS (Accessed 27 Aug 2019)

³ Kirkham, Chris. "Special Report: Juul copycats flood e-cig market, despite FDA rule." Reuters. 24 Sept. 2018. www.reuters.com/article/us-vaping-regulation-juul-specialreport/special-report-juul-copycats-flood-e-cig-market-despite-fda-rule-idUSKCN1M418W (Accessed 27 Aug 2019)

⁴ USA V. Philip Morris USA, Inc., et al., No. 99-CV-02496GK (U.S. Dist. Ct., D.C.), Final Opinion, August 17, 2006.

⁵ Kirkham, Chris. "Altria to Buy \$12.8 Billion Minority Stake in E-cigarette Company Juul." Reuters. 20 Dec. 2018. www.reuters.com/article/us-juul-altriagroup-m-a/altria-to-buy-12-8-billion-minority-stake-in-e-cigarette-company-juul-idUSKCN1OJ1JS (Accessed 27 Aug 2019)

⁶ Kirkham, Chris. "Special Report: Juul copycats flood e-cig market, despite FDA rule." Reuters. 24 Sept. 2018. www.reuters.com/article/us-vaping-regulation-juul-specialreport/special-report-juul-copycats-flood-e-cig-market-despite-fda-rule-idUSKCN1M418W (Access 27 Aug 2019)

⁷ Kirkham, Chris. "Special Report: Juul copycats flood e-cig market, despite FDA rule." Reuters. 24 Sept. 2018. www.reuters.com/article/us-vaping-regulation-juul-specialreport/special-report-juul-copycats-flood-e-cig-market-despite-fda-rule-idUSKCN1M418W (Access 27 Aug 2019)

⁸ Florida Youth Tobacco Survey (FYTS), Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Epidemiology, 2019.

⁹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Division of Population Health. BRFSS Prevalence & Trends Data [online]. 2017. [accessed Aug 28, 2019]. URL: <https://www.cdc.gov/brfss/brfssprevalence/>.