



## NEWS RELEASE

March 17, 2015

**Under Embargo until March 18, 2015 @ 12 noon**

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## **Niskayuna High School Student Named NY State Youth Advocate of the Year (YAYA)** *NYS Reality Check Honors Tobacco-Free Youth Champions on Kick Butts Day*

**Albany, NY**—Bianca Sciocchetti, a senior at Niskayuna High School, was named New York State Youth Advocate of the Year at a Kick Butts Day ceremony on March 18 at the Empire State Plaza. Kick Butts Day is a national day of youth activism to raise awareness about the impact of tobacco marketing on youth and promote community changes that support tobacco-free living.

As an active member of Capital District Reality Check since 2012, Sciocchetti has been a persistent and persuasive local voice in raising awareness of the problem of tobacco use in the Capital District. She has encouraged peers to reject the tobacco industry's deceptive marketing practices and stay tobacco-free, and she has educated local officials on what they can do to protect kids from the harms of tobacco. Sciocchetti's activism has ranged from providing public testimony and meeting with local legislators in support of reducing tobacco marketing to kids, to co-chairing a local event during the 2015 International Week of Action on Smoke-Free Movies. The event attracted 200 community members and resulted in signatures calling upon the Motion Picture Association of America to attach an "R" rating to any movie showing smoking.

In her application for YAYA, Sciocchetti wrote, "I've met many people who have lost a loved one to tobacco use or are smokers and wish they never started. I've never had to experience the tragedy of a family member dying from tobacco use, and I want to stop future generations from having to go through that."

Since 2001, Reality Check youth advocates have been working throughout New York State to prevent their peers from becoming next generation smokers by promoting changes that would end the manipulative tactics of the tobacco industry to recruit youth smokers. Four other NYS teens were also honored as Regional Youth Advocates of the Year for their tobacco control activism. They are: Aubrianna Weber, Western New York; Jordyn Camp, Central New York; Kali Bushey, Capital Region; and Matthew Bartolomeo, New York City.

"All these young people are an integral part of New York's tobacco control efforts," said Kelsey Madden, Reality Check Coordinator for the Capital District Tobacco-Free Coalition. "Their collective vision for a tobacco-free community, their limitless energy, and their mastery of effective activism is rivaled by none. What they lack in age and experience, they make up for with intelligence, creativity, and genuine desire to make their communities healthier places to live, learn, work and play."

Niskayuna High School SAPE Advisor, Christina Pizzino-Catalano, had high words of praise for Sciocchetti. “Bianca truly cares about the well-being of her peers in Niskayuna and in the larger Capital District community. That genuine concern is evident in all that she has accomplished as an active member of SAPE and Reality Check. I’m delighted that her tobacco-free activism is being recognized and have no doubt that this is just a springboard for all the positive social changes she will continue to fight for in college and beyond.”

Reality Check youth advocates and leaders from across the state gathered in Albany on Kick Butts Day to announce the award winners, attend training on youth advocacy, and get inspiration from each other and from the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids Central Region Youth Advocate of the Year, Rebecca ‘Becky’ Bade, 16, of New Bloomfield, Missouri. Erica Olmstead, a former Reality Check youth from upstate New York who is now the Youth Advocacy Program Associate for the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids in Washington, DC, delivered the keynote address.

The Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids sponsors Kick Butts Day. As part of this national day of youth activism, there are local events scheduled in communities in New York State and more than 1,000 events in schools and communities across the United States and around the world.

***Reality Check** is a statewide youth-led movement to prevent youth smoking. Reality Check strives to create positive change in our community through grassroots activism, community education, media campaigns and decision-maker education. Visit Capital District Reality Check at <https://www.facebook.com/capitalregionrc>*

*The **Capital District Tobacco-Free Coalition** is a community partnership of organizations and individuals working to decrease the impact of tobacco on our community, by promoting smoking cessation, preventing youth initiation and promoting smoke-free environments. Visit Capital District Tobacco-Free Coalition at [www.SmokeFreeCapital.org](http://www.SmokeFreeCapital.org).*

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