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Teen Tobacco Prevention Advocates Unveil New TV Spots and Research as They Train New Advocates for Action

Success Stories, Testimonials and High Energy Mark Ground-Breaking Three-Day Conference as TRU Movement Gathers Steam

(Durham, NC) –Lt. Gov. Beverly Perdue, chair of the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) and HWTF grantees from across North Carolina unveiled the new **TRU** (Tobacco. Reality. Unfiltered.) television commercials and recognized outstanding teen tobacco prevention advocates during a three-day information exchange and training conference, *Making a Difference: Building a TRU Movement*.

The conference is designed to help the HWTF grantees leverage their knowledge base, share successes, build relationships, hone skills and strategies, and have them return home energized and empowered to make a difference in their communities. Thirteen of the grantees on hand are new to HWTF's teen tobacco use prevention initiative, having been funded last spring when the initiative's budget increased from \$18.6 million to \$28 million.

"I have witnessed some incredible things this past year due to the dedication and diligence of the fine people in this room," said Lt. Gov. Perdue in her keynote address. "Every person here serves as a role-model to the young people of North Carolina. It takes all of us to spread the message of tobacco prevention."

The newest commercial is a result of the first-ever **TRU** Road Trip, a summer trek across North Carolina that shared the tobacco prevention message and captured teen testimonials on the dangers of tobacco use. The spot features teens who attended Road Trip events from western to eastern North Carolina, including one who confessed on camera that he's been smoking since age 8 and is desperate to stop because, "Every time you smoke another cigarette, there goes another breath of your life right there."

The new spot, entitled "Tobacco-Free Travelogue," will air on TV networks with large teen audiences, including MTV, BET, Fox, UPN and the WB. Lt. Gov. Perdue also unveiled a Spanish-language spot to air on Univision which features Hispanic teens from across the state. Research shows that the best way to spread the teen tobacco use prevention message is to have teens talking to teens

To many at the conference, HWTF's teen tobacco use prevention initiative has already made a significant difference. "When I was younger, people didn't talk to kids as much about the dangers of cigarettes, but the **TRU** movement has made that possible," said conference speaker Rachel Biddix, a member of S.A.V.E. (Survivors and Victims of Tobacco Empowerment) who had a laryngectomy as a result of tobacco use. Biddix, who participated in the **TRU** Road Trip, added, "I know my story has made a difference. I know from the tears I saw in young people's eyes when I told them what I had been through. What I say to you today is: Do not hold back. Do everything you can to get young people's attention. Do everything you can to make a difference!"

Building upon successful ideas for community involvement in teen tobacco use prevention, conference organizers released new 2004 Youth Tobacco Survey data suggesting one reliable way to raise tobacco-free youth is to get them involved in school and community activities aimed at reducing and preventing tobacco use among their peers.

"Most parents – even those who use tobacco – don't want their children to start," remarked Debra Horton, a member of NC PTA. "Providing opportunities for youth involvement in tobacco prevention efforts is a great way schools, PTAs, and communities can work together to support families in keeping their kids off tobacco."

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ABOUT THE NC HEALTH AND WELLNESS TRUST FUND

The NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund makes North Carolina stronger, both physically and economically, by funding programs that promote preventive health. Created by the General Assembly in 2000 to allocate a portion of North Carolina's share of the national tobacco settlement, HWTF has invested \$55 million to support preventive health initiatives and \$78 million to fund a prescription drug assistance program for seniors. For more information, please visit www.hwtf.org.

ABOUT TRU

Tobacco. Reality. Unfiltered, commonly known as **TRU**, is North Carolina's first-ever statewide youth tobacco prevention multi-media campaign that uses testimonials of real North Carolina teens as well as hard hitting facts to dissuade young people from using tobacco. This campaign is part of the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund's teen tobacco use prevention initiative. Funded at \$28 million from HWTF, this grassroots initiative includes the **TRU** media campaign, as well as a grant program including 70 grants (50 community-based grants, 4 statewide grants and 16 tobacco free school mini-grants) to a total of 55 organizations. To find out more about **TRU**, please visit www.realityunfiltered.com.

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