

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JAN. 24, 2004

UNION COUNTY EAGER TO WIPE OUT TREND TOWARD SPIT TOBACCO

SMOKELESS TOBACCO IS NOT HARMLESS TOBACCO

(Monroe, NC) – Young people – especially those involved in athletics – who choose to use spit tobacco are making a dangerous, potentially fatal mistake. That’s why Union County Public Schools are taking the innovative step of sponsoring a “Spit Tobacco Awareness Week” at five local schools.

Paul Turner, director of the NC Spit Tobacco Education Program (NC STEP), will be addressing the dangers and trends of spit tobacco, and its consequences to middle and high school students, as well as leading workshops for Union County Public School coaches, PE and Health teachers, school nurses and tobacco educators. The presentation aims to send a strong message to youth that smokeless tobacco should never be seen as a healthy alternative to smoking cigarettes. When it comes to tobacco products, there are **no** healthy alternatives.

“New trends are showing us that some of our youth are turning to dip as a “safe” substitute to cigarettes, said Kim Bayha, Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Coordinator for Union County Public Schools. “We want to ensure that students understand this is not the case.”

Local high school TRU (Tobacco. Reality. Unfiltered.) clubs in Union County will also be jumping on the tobacco prevention bandwagon by sponsoring “Kiss Me, I Don’t Smoke” activities during the week of Valentine’s Day.

Union County Public Schools tobacco prevention programs are funded by the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund’s teen tobacco use prevention initiative.

What: Spit Tobacco Awareness Week
 Student Presentations and Staff Workshops

When: **January 26 – 29, 2004 (activities outlined below)**

Wed. Jan 26	Forest Hills High	8:30 – 11:00 (2 sessions)	Auditorium	9 th Health/PE Classes; Weight Training; ROTC; Horticulture
	Wingate University	11:30 – 1:00 LUNCHEON	Laverne Banquet Hall Room C	All Coaching Staff (25-30)
	Forest Hills High	1:30 – 3:10 (2 sessions)	Auditorium	9 th Health/PE Classes; Weight Training; ROTC; Horticulture
	Forest Hills High – athletes	3:30 – 4:15	Gym	Baseball (boys trying out) Boys/Girls Track; Girls Softball

Thurs. Jan 27	Piedmont Middle	8:30 – 9:15 9:20 – 10:05	Auditorium	
	Piedmont Middle	10:20 – 11:10 Lunch	Auditorium	
	Piedmont High	2:00 – 2:35 2:45 – 3:15	Auditorium	
	Union County Public Works – tentative	4:00 – 5:15 pm	Jefferson Room	UCPS coaches, Health/PE teachers, school nurses, tobacco educators
	Wingate University	8:00 – 9:30 pm (Pizza at 9pm)	Cuddy Arena	Students/athletes (coaches to encourage)/Lyceum credits provided
Fri. Jan 28	Parkwood Middle	8:30 – 9:10	Auditorium	
	Parkwood High	9:40 – 10:25	Auditorium	9 th graders
	Parkwood Middle	12:00 – 1:30	Auditorium	
	Parkwood High	2:10 – 2:50	Auditorium	10 th graders
Sat. Jan 29	Wingate University	9:00 am – 12:00 noon	Laverne Banquet Hall – rooms B&C	UCPS coaches, Health/PE teachers, tobacco educators school nurses; UC Youth Athletic Association reps

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.hwtfc.org.

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