

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**HWTF Honors Community Champions with
2005 *Distinguished Service Award in Preventive Health***

Dr. Karen Smith receives *Addressing Health Disparities Award*

RALEIGH, NC – Proven and innovative approaches make preventive health a priority. It is this kind of commitment that has earned Dr. Karen Smith of Raeford the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund's (HWTF) inaugural *Distinguished Service Award in Preventive Health*. Lt. Gov. Beverly Perdue, who serves as HWTF chair, presented Dr. Smith with the *Addressing Health Disparities Award* on Dec. 6 at the McKimmon Center in Raleigh.

"Dr. Smith has used her rural upbringing to make sure that rural residents have the best access to health care possible," said Lt. Gov. Perdue. "Her passion for serving rural communities and the underserved is evident throughout her successful career."

The new *Distinguished Service in Preventive Health Awards* were created to recognize North Carolina's top community leaders who have demonstrated a tireless commitment to the health and wellness of North Carolina's citizens. These recipients represent various professions including education, government, medicine, business and philanthropy. This year, 11 individuals from across the state received this high honor from Lt. Gov. Perdue and the HWTF.

Dr. Smith's independent family medicine center is a state-of-the-art facility that has been recognized across the country for its implementation of electronic health records technology. With a majority of her patient population being either uninsured or on Medicaid, Dr. Smith's innovative business practice serves as a model for other physicians and health care providers.

Dr. Smith has furthered her mission of making health care available to all by educating her colleagues about the economic, racial and cultural disparities that exist in the health care system. She chairs a statewide family medicine council on the subject of health disparities and has also been recognized nationally for her efforts. Dr. Smith is the board chair and immediate past-president of the North Carolina Academy of Family Physicians.

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 invests in programs and partnerships related to teen tobacco use, prescription drugs, childhood obesity and health disparities. For more information, please visit www.HealthWellNC.com.