

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 25, 2008

## **NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund announces the first tobacco cessation and wellness program for mental health centers**

**Raleigh, NC** – The NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) announces the creation of a new statewide tobacco cessation program for mental health consumers called “Breathe Easy, Live Well.” Approximately 70% of individuals with serious mental illness smoke cigarettes, and individuals with mental illness or addiction consume nearly *half* of all cigarettes purchased in the United States.

The program, which will be implemented in psychosocial treatment centers across the state, aims to reduce the harmful effects that tobacco has on individuals with mental illness by providing them with equal access to smoke-free environments and cessation programs, in addition to increasing their awareness about overall wellness.

The project is funded by the HWTF as part of its overall tobacco cessation initiative. To date, HWTF has spent \$54.3 million to address tobacco use in the state since its efforts began in 2003.

“The NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund is committed to reducing the health effects of tobacco use in our state for all populations,” said Lt. Governor Bev Perdue, HWTF chair. “Through this initiative, the Commission is intensifying its efforts to reach out to this particularly vulnerable population with specialized services designed to better meet their unique needs.”

HWTF has awarded \$505,000 to the NC Evidence Based Practice Center, part of Southern Regional AHEC, to pilot the program in mental health community/day treatment centers, also known as clubhouses.

The first four pilot programs include Adventure House in Shelby, Atlantic House in Morehead City, Sanctuary House in Greensboro, and Threshold Clubhouse in Durham. The clubhouses are non-profit, psychosocial rehabilitation programs serving North Carolina adults with severe and persistent mental illness.

The clubhouses will begin training in November/December 2008, and wellness and cessation courses will launch in January 2009. For more information, please visit [www.healthwellnc.com](http://www.healthwellnc.com).

### **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 \$199 million to support preventive health initiatives and \$102 million to fund prescription drug assistance programs. For more information, please visit [www.HealthWellNC.com](http://www.HealthWellNC.com).*

###