

For Immediate Release

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NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund Awards Fit Community and A⁺ Fit School Designations and Grants Promoting Healthy Lifestyles

RALEIGH, NC – The North Carolina Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) announced the award of seven Fit Community designations and, for the first time, seven A⁺ Fit School designations to North Carolina municipalities, nonprofit organizations and schools. These designations recognize the work that has been done to promote physical activity, healthy eating and tobacco-free lifestyles through programs, policies and environmental changes at the school and community level. In addition, a total of \$555,000 in grant funding was awarded to selected towns, counties and schools with demonstrated capacity to implement projects that promote healthful changes.

Obesity has emerged as a major threat to children and adults across the United States and is particularly prevalent here in North Carolina. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 61 percent of North Carolina adults are overweight or obese, with obesity-related expenses adding up to more than \$2.1 billion annually. HWTF's Fit Community and A⁺ Fit School programs support local efforts to address this growing problem.

"Healthy choices are not only a matter of individual decision making, they are also influenced by community and school environments that foster healthy behaviors and make supportive resources available," said Vandana Shah, HWTF Executive Director. "These designees and grantees have demonstrated a commitment to improving the health of their communities and schools and will make a real difference in the long term."

Founded in 2005, the Fit Community program provides grants to North Carolina communities to support health and wellness, and it selects designees on an annual basis that have met specific criteria to be recognized as a Fit Community. This year, seven North Carolina municipalities were selected by the HWTF Commission to receive the Fit Community designation to recognize their success in promoting healthier lifestyles among their residents. The Town of Cramerton was awarded the Silver level Fit Community designation. The cities of Asheville, Goldsboro, Wilmington, Gaston County, and the towns of Mt. Airy and Oak Island, were all recognized as Bronze level Fit Communities.

The HWTF Commission also announced the award of eight Fit Community grants awarded to: the City of Asheville Parks, Recreation and Cultural Arts Department; the Currituck County Parks and Recreation Department; the City of Goldsboro Parks and Recreation Department; the Graham County Department of Public Health; Millbridge Elementary School; Tyrell County Community Development Corporation; the City of Wilmington; and Yancey County Schools.

The Fit Community grantees will implement such projects as: constructing walking trails, starting community gardens, supporting employee wellness programs and enhancing physical activity resources in schools.

All North Carolina municipalities and nonprofits were eligible to apply for the Fit Community grants and receive up to \$60,000 in grant funding over a period of two years. HWTF has awarded more than \$2 million as part of its Fit Community grant program over the past four years.

This year, HWTF expanded its "Fit" designations program to include an A+ Fit School designation recognizing North Carolina schools for the work they are doing in promoting health among students, teachers, staff and administrators. A⁺ Fit School designations were awarded this month by the HWTF Commission to: Graham A. Barden Elementary, Griffith Elementary, Vienna Elementary, Washington GT Magnet, C.T. Overton Elementary, Flat Rock Middle and Clemmons Elementary.

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The first phase of the A+ Fit School grants program launched this month with grants awarded to Arapahoe Charter Elementary, C.T. Overton Elementary, East Wilkes High, Forest View Elementary, Graham A. Barden Elementary, Griffith Elementary, Jackson County Alternative School, Pinehurst Elementary and West View Elementary.

All North Carolina schools were eligible to apply for the A+ Fit School grants and receive up to \$7,500 in grant funding over a period of one year.

For more information about HWTF's obesity prevention programs, visit 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.

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