

MEDIA ADVISORY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 4, 2006

**HWTF TEEN TOBACCO-USE PREVENTION GRANT PROGRAMS TO
CELEBRATE *KICK BUTTS DAY* ACROSS NORTH CAROLINA**

Local American Idol Contestant Among Speakers Against Tobacco Use

(RALEIGH, NC) – *American Idol* contestant Heather Cox and a former baseball player, who was diagnosed with oral cancer at age 17 after using spit tobacco, will be among the individuals participating in local events as part of the 11th annual Kick Butts Day celebration. NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) teen tobacco use prevention and cessation grant programs will be sponsoring events across the state.

Kick Butts Day, an annual event sponsored by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, is an opportunity for youth to participate in the fight against tobacco use. This year's event will highlight the fact that 1,200 people in the United States die every day from tobacco use and secondhand smoke according to the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids.

Jonesville native Heather Cox, who made it to the top 24 on the show *American Idol*, will be performing at a Kick Butts Day event at Surry Community College while Gruen von Behrens will share his powerful testimony on the consequences of spit tobacco use at schools in the west. Other statewide activities will feature HWTF grantees and youth sponsoring tobacco awareness displays and booths; poster contests; skits and school presentations by tobacco survivors and local physicians. According to the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, more than 2,000 events are planned nationwide to commemorate Kick Butts Day.

Recently released data shows that youth smoking rates have hit an historic low in North Carolina. The 2005 Youth Tobacco Survey reveals that high school smoking rates have declined by one-third since 1999, and smoking rates among middle schoolers have dropped by two-thirds. Since HWTF began funding teen tobacco use prevention efforts in 2003, the rate of decline in high school smoking has nearly tripled. The data translates into **27,000 fewer teen smokers since 2003**.

WHO: HWTF teen tobacco use prevention and cessation grantees from several counties across the state.

WHAT: Local events around the state to celebrate 11th annual Kick Butts Day

WHEN: Wed., April 5, 2006 (some events will be held later this week)

REPORTERS: Visit www.HealthWellNC.com to find an event in your area.

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 \$127 million to support preventive health initiatives and \$78 million to fund a prescription drug assistance program. For more information, please visit www.HealthWellNC.com.