

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund Announces
Availability of Grants to Extend Medication Assistance Program**
More than 40,000 North Carolinians Have Gained Access to Free Drugs

(RALEIGH) – The NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) announces the availability of \$2 million in grant funding over 18 months to help low-income North Carolina residents gain access to prescription drugs that many find they are unable to pay for. This is the third round of funding for the Medication Assistance Program (MAP) which has delivered \$68.8 million worth of free medications to nearly 40,000 patients over the last three years all across the state.

Starting today, HWTF will accept applications from eligible organizations that will help low-income residents of all ages apply for free, discounted and low-cost drugs through pharmaceutical companies' prescription assistance programs (PAP). In addition, applicants may choose to work with Medicare-eligible seniors in helping them identify their optimal federal plan.

Currently, there are 61 organizations receiving \$15 million in MAP grants which are set to expire on June 30, 2006. The NC Institute of Medicine listed HWTF's statewide MAP program as a "significant safety net for the uninsured" in its NC Healthcare Safety Net Report 2005.

"MAP is a program that has been so spectacularly successful and recognized statewide that we hope by extending it for another 18 months, the General Assembly will recognize its value and take steps to fund the program permanently," said Lt. Gov. Bev Perdue, HWTF chair. "We cannot turn our backs on the people in our state who need these drugs to live."

Organizations are eligible to receive an HWTF grant if they fit into any of the following categories:

- *A state agency*
- *A local government or other political subdivision of the state, or a combination of such entities*
- *A nonprofit organization which has a significant purpose promoting the public's health.*

Grant proposals will be accepted from existing HWTF grantees as well as other NC organizations not currently receiving HWTF funding. Interested applicants can obtain a copy of the Request for Proposal and submit an online application by visiting HWTF's Web site at www.HealthWellNC.com. **Applications will be accepted until April 17, 2006 at 5:00 p.m.**

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.

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