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North Carolina's Schools Are Now 100% Tobacco Free

Tobacco Free Policies Implemented in All 115 North Carolina School Districts

(Raleigh, NC) – The North Carolina Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) announced today that all 115 of North Carolina's school districts have passed 100% tobacco free policies.

The announcement marks a major milestone for HWTF's 100% Tobacco Free Schools (TFS) campaign and for the state's youth tobacco prevention efforts, which expanded greatly in 2002 with funding and leadership from HWTF. A 100% TFS policy prohibits tobacco use on school property and at school-related events anywhere, at anytime, and by anyone. HWTF Chair Lt. Gov. Bev Perdue called the announcement a public health victory for North Carolina.

"Stopping our young people from smoking today will save lives tomorrow," said Lt. Gov. Perdue. "Tobacco-free schools are a critical step in creating North Carolina's first tobacco-free generation."

Inspired by local leadership, a few school systems, such as Caldwell County and Chapel Hill/Carrboro, paved the way by passing a 100% tobacco-free schools policy in the 1990s. This nascent tobacco-free schools movement gained significant momentum in December 2002 when HWTF awarded 31 grants to combat teen tobacco use in the school systems. In July 2005, Northampton County became the state's 58th district to adopt a TFS policy, marking the halfway point for 100% compliance. The campaign was further helped by a July 2007 state law that called for compliance in all 115 districts no later than August 1, 2008.

Reaching 100% policy compliance was largely an effort at the grassroots level by teens, school administrators, parents and local HWTF-funded organizations that pushed for the policy in their communities. Grassroots activities were augmented by a statewide media campaign and awareness efforts spearheaded by HWTF.

School districts that have a well-established TFS policy have 40% fewer smokers than other schools. The UNC School of Family Medicine cites the increasing number of TFS school districts as one of the reasons for the increasing number of tobacco-free youth in North Carolina.

The HWTF and the TFS initiative will continue to help schools with TFS compliance through the NC Tobacco Free Schools web site, which offers implementation resources, including a compliance manual, communication guidelines and research facts. More information is available at www.nctobaccofreeschools.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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