

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**North Carolina Teens Say No to Tobacco Use
90% of NC teens say that smoking isn't cool**

HWTF Chair Lt. Gov. Bev Perdue available for interviews

(Raleigh, NC) – A new report shows that North Carolina's Teen Tobacco Use Prevention and Cessation Initiative continues to gain momentum with teens across the state. In an historic first, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Medicine found that seven out of 10 NC teens are familiar with the statewide teen tobacco prevention media campaign funded by the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF).

"Our teens are getting the message, using tobacco is unhealthy and dangerous," said Lt. Governor Bev Perdue, HWTF Chair. "We are another step closer to reaching our goal of creating North Carolina's first tobacco-free generation."

According to the report, more than 500,000 youth (11-17 year olds) in NC are currently aware of the TRU (*Tobacco. Reality. Unfiltered.*) campaign. TRU is designed to educate young people about the dangers of tobacco use to encourage youth to remain tobacco free. Awareness has increased by nearly one-third over the last year – up from 54 percent in 2006 to 71 percent in 2007.

In addition to increases in overall recognition of the TRU brand, response to the TV ads airing this year also remains strong. The report finds that more than 90 percent of the state's youth agree that smoking doesn't make them look cool or fit in. This increase in awareness followed a quadrupling in HWTF's funding for the campaign from \$1.1 million to \$4.5 million annually. The increased funding went into effect in the fall of 2006.

Most recently, the TRU campaign kicked off a major teen recruitment effort for the 2007-2008 school year, setting a statewide goal to recruit at least 5,000 NC teens to join the tobacco-free movement by taking an online pledge at www.realityunfiltered.com.

A full copy of the report is available at: http://www.healthwellinc.com/hwtfc/htmlfiles/fundprty_teentob-TRU.htm

HWTF Chair Lt. Gov. Perdue will be available for interviews from 10 to 10:30 a.m. today (contact Barbara Moeykens by 9:45 a.m. 919-855-6881 to arrange for an interview with the Lt. Governor). HWTF Executive Director Vandana Shah will be available all day (contact Barbara Moeykens at 919-855-6881 or Amy Jackson at 919-882-1928 to arrange for an interview).

ABOUT THE NC HEALTH AND WELLNESS TRUST FUND:

The NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund was created by the General Assembly in 2000 to allocate a portion of NC's share of the national tobacco settlement, HWTF has invested \$143 million to support preventive health initiatives and \$102 million to fund prescription drug assistance programs. For more information, please visit www.HealthWellNC.com.

ABOUT TRU:

Tobacco. Reality. Unfiltered., commonly known as **TRU**, uses testimonials of real North Carolina teens as well as hard-hitting facts to dissuade youth from using tobacco. Funded at \$65 million from HWTF, this grassroots initiative includes the **TRU** media campaign, as well as a grant programs to organizations working in all 100 counties to reduce teen tobacco use. To find out more about **TRU**, please visit www.realityunfiltered.com.