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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Thousands of NC Teens to Pledge to Stay Tobacco-Free

Lt. Gov. Bev Perdue leads launch of "TRU Team" at Southeast Raleigh High School

(RALEIGH, NC) – Today, NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) Chair Lt. Gov. Bev Perdue launched the TRU (Tobacco. Reality. Unfiltered.) Recruitment Campaign designed to encourage students across the state to get involved in teen tobacco use prevention. Lt. Gov. Perdue kicked off the year-long campaign with hundreds of students enrolled at Southeast Raleigh Magnet High School's Healthful Living and PE classes. The goal of the TRU Recruitment Campaign is to rally at least 5,000 teens across the state to join the "TRU team" by signing an online pledge to be tobacco free and to refer their peers to this website and its resources. Teens will also be encouraged to get directly involved by contacting local HWTF grantees that are working on tobacco prevention efforts at the grassroots level.

Since HWTF began funding teen tobacco use prevention efforts, teen smoking rates are at historic lows - with eight out of 10 teens choosing not to smoke. A recent UNC School of Medicine report on the impact of the statewide TRU media campaign also revealed that awareness of the TRU brand among youth rose from 54% in 2006 to 71% in 2007, and that over 500,000 NC youth between the ages of 11 and 17 are already aware of the campaign.

"North Carolina's teens are playing a key role in our successful efforts to lower youth smoking rates," said HWTF Chair Lt. Governor Bev Perdue. "That's why this new recruitment effort is critical. Students realize that tobacco is yesterday's cool. With 5,000 more teens engaged, we will create North Carolina's first generation of tobacco-free kids.

Officials with the Wake County School System, the N.C. General Assembly members and public health advocates were among the special guests joining Lt. Gov. Perdue at the event. State Board of Education Chair Howard Lee, Southeast Principal Beulah Wright and Jessica Moore, the school's student government association president, all spoke about the importance of keeping young people tobacco free and offered their support for the TRU campaign.

The school's pep band added excitement to the event as the crowd took in the campaign's new images. Lt. Gov. Perdue also unveiled the improved TRU Web site at www.realityunfiltered.com where teens can sign the online pledge to be tobacco free, share stories, and get online badges to post on their personal Web sites.

The TRU Recruitment Campaign will also work to promote tobacco-free schools. In fact, 89 of the state's 115 school districts have adopted 100% tobacco-free school policies, and a new state law will make the remaining school districts 100 percent tobacco-free by August 2008.

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.

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.