

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**May 30, 2006**

## **HWTF Chair Lt. Gov. Bev Perdue Implores Teens and College-Age Tobacco Users to Call NC Quitline on World No Tobacco Day**

**(RALEIGH)** – Lt. Gov. Bev Perdue, chair of the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF), encourages teens and young adult smokers in North Carolina to celebrate the annual World No Tobacco Day (WNTD) on May 31 by calling the HWTF-funded Quitline (1-800-QUIT-NOW) for help quitting. The World Health Organization sponsors this global event to raise awareness of the international impact of tobacco use and to promote a tobacco-free environment.

Last year, the Trust Fund announced the creation of the statewide Quitline to provide cessation support for young people under the age of 25, their caregivers and school employees who want to kick the habit. Quitline NC provides free, confidential, one-on-one support for smokers who want to start living a healthier lifestyle.

“Kicking the tobacco habit is one of the best things that a smoker can do to improve their own health, and through our Quitline, we are committed to helping them every step of the way,” said Lt. Gov. Perdue, “World No Tobacco Day is an opportunity for us to join other countries to encourage smokers to quit a habit that will ultimately rob them of their chance to live a healthy life. It is my hope that on this day, the Quitline phone lines will be ringing off the hook from callers who are ready to take this first step.”

World No Tobacco Day is the only global event where smokers around the world unite to break free from tobacco use. First held in 1988, WNTD is observed every year on May 31. Four countries – Australia, France, Switzerland and the United States – participate in this annual event.

Tobacco use continues to be the leading cause of preventable death in the United States and in North Carolina. According to the CDC, almost 28% of college age youth in North Carolina smoke; and 18-24 year olds represent the *only* age group nationally in which smoking rates are rising rather than falling.

However, teen smoking recent 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.**

To commemorate WNTD, tobacco users are encouraged to call Quitline NC at 800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) seven days a week from 8:00 a.m. to midnight.

### **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](http://www.HealthWellNC.com).