

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 29, 2009

## **NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund Launches Smoking Cessation Program for Prenatal and Postpartum Women: *You Quit, Two Quit***

RALEIGH, NC – The NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) has announced the launch of a statewide prenatal and postpartum smoking cessation program, *You Quit, Two Quit*, at an event held today at the Friday Center in Chapel Hill.

HWTF Executive Director Vandana Shah and nationally recognized cessation expert Dr. Cathy Melvin, director of the Dissemination Core at the Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center, highlighted the need for this program and encouraged health care providers across North Carolina to take on the challenge of addressing smoking cessation among pregnant women in their local areas.

According to the 2007 NC Vital Statistics data, 11 percent of pregnant women smoke during pregnancy. North Carolina also ranks 45th in the nation in infant mortality, among the worst in the nation. *You Quit, Two Quit* aims to decrease maternal and infant mortality and morbidity rates by reducing tobacco use and exposure in these special populations in the state.

The project is funded by HWTF as part of its statewide tobacco prevention and cessation initiative. *You Quit, Two Quit* will include a statewide education and outreach campaign and pilot projects based in Columbus, Davidson, Richmond and Wilkes counties, where the smoking rates among pregnant women are substantially higher than the statewide rate. HWTF has allocated \$387,000 for this effort over a three-year period. HWTF will partner with the Center for Maternal and Infant Health at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Medicine to implement the program.

“These startling statistics are a wake up call for North Carolina,” said Vandana Shah, HWTF Executive Director. “We hope this project will not only lower prenatal and postpartum smoking rates, but reduce children’s exposure to secondhand smoke and ultimately have an impact on reducing infant mortality as well. We look forward to partnering with health care providers across the state to build healthier families.”

The pilot programs will be based in local health departments in an effort to target lower-income populations. Each of the four health departments will develop a community-based smoking cessation project based on best practices that can be replicated in other parts of the state. The pilot programs will collaborate with local, private prenatal clinics, pediatric practices, family medicine providers and regional delivery hospitals.

An informational Web site, [www.youquittwoquit.com](http://www.youquittwoquit.com), was also launched today along with the program.

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