



NEWS RELEASE

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Breakthrough!

NC CELEBRATES REACHING HALF-WAY POINT IN DRIVE TO 100% TOBACCO FREE SCHOOLS

STATE LEADERS, HEALTH ADVOCATES, EDUCATORS AND TEENS CHALLENGE ALL NC PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO GO 100% TOBACCO-FREE

RALEIGH, NC – Lt. Gov. Beverly Perdue, chair of the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF), joined fellow state leaders, prominent educators, public health champions and teen tobacco prevention advocates from across North Carolina for a rally this morning at the State Capitol to celebrate the fact that more than half of the state's school districts have adopted a 100% Tobacco Free Schools (TFS) policy. The high-spirited group – which included a teen racecar driver, musical guests and a step team – also challenged the remaining 56 school districts to join the drive to 100% tobacco free schools.

“We are thrilled that more than half of North Carolina’s school districts have passed a 100% tobacco free school policy,” said Lt. Gov. Beverly Perdue. “The dangers of tobacco use are impossible to ignore, and we must get tobacco products away from our children and out of our schools.”

A 100% TFS policy prohibits tobacco use by anyone, anywhere at anytime on school property and at school related events. Since HWTF began funding local teen tobacco prevention use programs in 2002, 44 of the 115 school districts have adopted 100% TFS policies, bringing the statewide total to 59.

“The health of North Carolina’s youth is paramount to our state’s future,” said Mark Ezzell, 100% TFS Director. “School systems see this policy as an opportunity to provide the most optimal learning environment for their students and staff.”

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than 200,000 young people under the age of 18 alive today in North Carolina will die prematurely because of tobacco-related illnesses.

ABOUT THE NC HEALTH AND WELLNESS TRUST FUND

The NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) 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.hwtfc.org.

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