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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Pam Diggs
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Orange County TRU Students Raise Awareness about Tobacco Use on Great American Smokeout

Hillsborough – Youth advocates from Orange County Tobacco. Reality. Unfiltered. (TRU) are taking part in The American Cancer Society's Great American Smokeout (GASO) on November 18. Great American Smokeout is a nationwide event to encourage tobacco users to give up their habit for one day, in hopes of making a clean break from tobacco now or in the future.

As part of the GASO celebration, Orange County TRU students are using statistics about the dangers of tobacco use to raise awareness about the issue in their schools.

Throughout the year, youth advocates take part in a variety of activities to protect their peers from tobacco, including working to develop policies that reduce teen tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke and educating their peers about the importance of staying tobacco free.

"I joined TRU because I feel like tobacco products are harmful and have a huge impact on everyone, even those who don't use them," said Sydney Mascoll, a TRU member at Orange High School. Sharon Dominguez, a TRU member at Carrboro High School has learned about the dangers of tobacco use in peer educator training and, says "I'd like to help people to stop smoking for their health."

TRU clubs at the high schools in both Chapel Hill-Carrboro and Orange County Schools will be raising awareness about dangers of tobacco on November 18 using the number 33. According to the Center for Disease Control, 33 people die everyday from smoking in North Carolina. Students at Carrboro High, Cedar Ridge High, Chapel Hill High, and Orange High Schools will be wearing t-shirts and stickers with the number 33 to illustrate this startling statistic. TRU students at East are making a display at their school to thank students for not smoking. We are thankful that almost 90% of teens in Orange County do not smoke, however, we want to encourage the other 10% to quit," says Pam Diggs, Orange County Youth Tobacco Use Prevention Program Coordinator.

"Youth advocacy is one of the keys to success in reducing tobacco use," said Dr. Laura Gerald, Executive Director of the HWTF. "Promoting tobacco-free policies and encouraging cessation among their peers can have a powerful impact on the health of future generations, and we're proud of our TRU leaders."

Tobacco is the leading preventable cause of death in the US, killing more than 400,000 people every year. Every day, more than 4,000 youth try their first cigarette; another 1,000 youth become addicted smokers, one-third of whom will die prematurely as a result. For free, private help to quit smoking for good, people can call QuitlineNC at 1-800-QUIT-NOW.

Orange County TRU's teen tobacco prevention activities are funded by a grant from the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) and coordinated by Orange County Health Department in partnership with both Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools and Orange County Schools. TRU is HWTF's teen tobacco prevention campaign that includes a youth movement across the state and powerful media campaigns working to dissuade youth from using tobacco.

For information about the GASO event(s) at local schools in Orange County, contact Pam Diggs at 919-245-2424 or pdiggs@co.orange.nc.us.

ABOUT TRU:

Tobacco. Reality. Unfiltered., known as TRU, is the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund's initiative that includes both the state's youth movement and the powerful TRU media campaigns working to dissuade youth from using tobacco. TRU is supported by HWTF-funded 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 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 \$116 million to fund prescription drug assistance programs. For more information, please visit www.HealthWellNC.com.

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