



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Pam Diggs
Phone: 919-245-2424 office
Date: March 16, 2011

Cancer Survivor Reena Roberts Speaks at Local Schools for Kick Butts Day

Hillsborough – Teens from Orange County TRU (Tobacco. Reality. Unfiltered.) are joining thousands of youth across the country who are taking part in national Kick Butts Day (KBD) activities on March 23, 2011. Kick Butts Day engages youth in the effort to discourage tobacco use. As part of the KBD initiative, students in TRU groups across Orange County are conducting activities in their schools and community. To kick off Kick Butts Day activities, cancer survivor Reena Roberts, who appears in the statewide TRU media campaign, visited Phoenix Academy and Carrboro High School on Friday, March 11. Roberts, who was diagnosed with cancer at the age of 21, shared her story with 200 students about the consequences of using tobacco. She started smoking at the young age of 13. What she thought for two years was just a tickle in her throat or laryngitis turned out to be cancer. Doctors removed her larynx and she now uses an electronic voice box to speak. Roberts, who lives in Asheville, NC, previously spoke in Orange County in 2009 at the Kick Butts Day Carnival in Hillsborough.

"I was deeply affected by Reena's testimony," said Nadia Frink a member of Carrboro High TRU Club. "I believe it is amazing how strong she is to continue her life in such a positive way. Reena is truly an inspiration for TRU to continue the work that we do." Some students, including teens who currently smoke, were brought to tears as Roberts described how making the choice to smoke as a teen completely altered her life. Interested students received information about QuitlineNC, NC's free 1-800-QUIT-NOW phone service.

Orange County TRU's teen tobacco prevention activities are funded by a grant from the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) and coordinated locally by the Orange County Health Department in partnership with both school districts. Throughout the year, young advocates participate in a variety of activities to protect youth from tobacco, including educating their peers about the importance of staying tobacco-free. The group has many members dedicated to saving teens from a lifetime of health problems. Orange County TRU has a club at each high school.

"Tobacco-related illnesses are the number one cause of death in our state," said Laurel McMullen, Cedar Ridge High TRU Club President. "It's our hope to change that by creating North Carolina's first tobacco-free generation." Laurel and fellow TRU students at Cedar Ridge will create a Pledge Wall where students can pledge to be tobacco-free or help a loved one quit tobacco on Kick Butts Day.

TRU club members in both Chapel Hill-Carrboro City and Orange County high schools will teach their peers about the dangers of tobacco on March 23. Orange High School TRU students will conduct an educational presentation for the freshman class. TRU students at Chapel Hill High School will hold a Kick Butts Day Carnival at the school with fun educational booths and activities. East Chapel Hill High TRU students will post facts about the dangers of tobacco around the school to help raise awareness.

"Kids are a powerful part of the solution to reducing youth tobacco use," said Matthew L. Myers, president of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, which

**ORANGE COUNTY
HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

Rosemary L. Summers,
MPH, DrPH
Health Director

Richard E. Whitted Human
Services Center
300 West Tryon Street
Post Office Box 8181
Hillsborough, NC 27278
Phone: (919) 245-2411
Fax: (919) 644-3007
www.co.orange.nc.us/health



Finance and Administrative
Operations

Dental Health Services

Environmental Health
Services

Health Promotion and
Education Services

Personal Health Services



300 West Tryon Street
Hillsborough, NC 27278

PH: (919) 245-2400



2501 Homestead Road
Chapel Hill, NC 27516

PH: (919) 968-2022

Health Promotion and Education

coordinates KBD. "Youth leaders have the opportunity to set the example that using tobacco is not cool."

Tobacco is the leading preventable cause of death in the US, killing more than 400,000 people every year, and over 12,000 of those deaths are in North Carolina. An estimated 416,000 NC youth are exposed to secondhand smoke in their homes, putting them at higher risk for a number of adverse health effects such as ear and eye infections, asthma, bronchitis, and even Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

For information about local Kick Butts Day activities, contact Pam Diggs, Youth Tobacco Use Prevention Program Coordinator, at (919) 245-2424 or pdiggs@co.orange.nc.us. For information on the national initiative, visit kickbuttsday.org.

-30-

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 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 \$102 million to fund prescription drug assistance programs. For more information, please visit www.HealthWellNC.com.