



ORANGE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LOCAL YOUTH AWARDED STATEWIDE TRU YOUTH ADVOCATE AWARD

HILLSBOROUGH – Local youth are among the first in North Carolina to receive the Tobacco. Reality. Unfiltered. (TRU) Youth Advocate Certificate, a statewide award recognizing youth advocacy achievement in teen tobacco use prevention. The certificate is awarded by the North Carolina Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) and signed by Governor Perdue.

Local recipients of the certificate from Orange County Schools include: Holly Black of Orange High School, Sean Cortes a graduate of Cedar Ridge High School, and Kaitlyn Stubblefield also a graduate of Cedar Ridge High School. Youth who receive this certificate have completed a series of required tasks including: participation in at least four teen tobacco prevention trainings; implementation of a teen tobacco prevention presentation or activity; and the provision of at least ten hours of relevant community service. The students will be recognized at the Orange County Schools Board of Education meeting on Monday, June 21 at 7:00pm.

“These students have taken an active role in keeping our schools tobacco-free,” said Donna Williams, Director of Student Support Services for Orange County Schools. “We commend them for achieving this certification. During our partnership with TRU, we have seen teen tobacco rates decrease in our District.”

Tobacco. Reality. Unfiltered. (TRU) is HWTF’s statewide initiative to prevent tobacco use among teens. Orange County’s TRU program is coordinated by the Orange County Health Department in partnership with Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools and Orange County Schools. The Program has TRU Clubs at each of the five high schools in the County made up of 50 youth advocates who are working to prevent teen tobacco use in our community and schools.

“It was no small undertaking for these youth to meet the requirements of being certified,” said Pam Diggs, the Health Department’s Youth Tobacco Use Prevention Program Coordinator. “All of these youth have been dedicated advocates in the TRU movement.”

Activities undertaken by these advocates include projects for national Kick Butts Day, tobacco education presentations at local middle schools, and cigarette butt clean ups in downtown Hillsborough and Chapel Hill.

Holly Black helped organize a freshman class assembly at Orange High School by deciding what tobacco prevention activities to do and teaching other TRU members how to do those activities. “The freshmen, hopefully, learned about tobacco and its harmful effects,” said Holly Black, “it feels really good to do my part.”

“We are so proud of these young leaders,” said Dr. Chuck Willson, HWTF Commission Chair. “Through this certification, we want to recognize the

significant contributions they make to the health of their communities by educating their peers about the dangers of tobacco use and encouraging them to remain tobacco free.”

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.

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 a 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.

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